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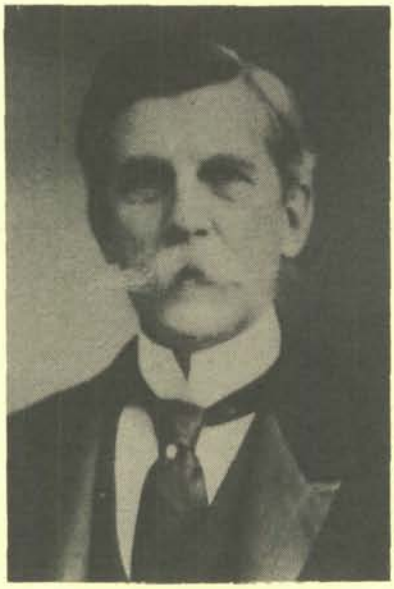

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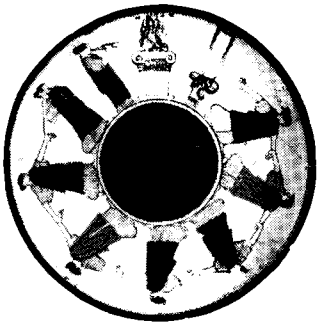

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Life and Letters

Merely Anecdotal

ARISTIDES

I am moderately confident that I am not yet in my dotage, though for decades now I have been in what might be called my anecdotage. Not only the love of anecdote but the urge, almost never successfully resisted, to tell one's own anecdotes mark the condition I think of as one's anecdotage. The older one grows, of course, the more anecdotes one accumulates, the keener the impulse to recount them again and again—and yes, I fear, yet again. But in this line, if in few others, I believe I was precocious. I grew up in a strong anecdotal tradition; much value was placed on being able to tell a story with panache. Frequently, when I was a boy and something interesting or amusing was happening to me, I would begin formulating the language in which I would recount the experience to my friends even as I was going through it. Looking back at this now, I should have realized that this marked me, for better *and* worse, as a writer, to the somewhat-removed-from-life manner born.

As an early anecdotalist, I was fortunate to have a fairly large reservoir of boyish experience from which to draw. Mine was a big-city boyhood; it took place in Chicago, at a time when the city of the big shoulders had already developed a serious slouch but had not yet become, as so many modern cities now have, slightly menacing. My young friends and I roamed the city as if it were some lush new planet—sweets hanging from every tree, new and interesting forms of life turning up everywhere—that we felt we were the first to discover. As adolescents, we felt we possessed the city, and we picked the cityscape clean of all that it could yield in experience, with a special interest—there were no Eagle Scouts among us—in illicit experience. And then, quite as good, perhaps even a bit better, we took such experience as we found and touched it up and retold it again in anecdote. Not kiss and tell but live and tell was our motto. As a writing man, this has of course remained my motto to this day.

Not long after writing these first two paragraphs, I made a person-to-person call to London. My friendly MCI operator, while tapping in the London number, asked me if the party on the other end would be speaking English. It seemed to me an odd question to ask. "Rather better English than my own," I answered. I told my English friend about it straightaway. He found it amusing, and I suppose it is, faintly. But what is the point of it? That telephone operators nowadays know almost nothing about the world? That England's position in the world has been so greatly weakened that adults now walk the earth who do not know what language the English speak? Or is it that people, such as this telephone operator, get so locked into routine that they sometimes ask perfectly silly questions? I told it to two other people during the course of the day. I am writing about it now. Why do I feel the need to retell it? Is it, finally, a true anecdote?

Since I clearly have anecdote fever, perhaps I ought to attempt to define my germs. Samuel Johnson first defined an anecdote as "something yet unpublished; secret history." Later he enlarged his definition to include: "a biographical incident; a minute passage of private life." Isaac D'Israeli, in his *Dissertation on Anecdotes* called them "minute notices of human nature and of human learning." *The Oxford English Dictionary* is helpful in defining an anecdote as "the narrative of a detached incident, or of a single event, told as being in itself interesting or striking." Elizabeth Longford, who edited *The Oxford Book of Royal Anecdotes*, holds that all anecdotes "must make some attempt at

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punch." All these definitions are aided immensely by the reminder of Edmund Fuller, who edited the *Thesaurus of Anecdotes*, that "anecdotes are stories with points."

The anecdote has not had an altogether good press. While anecdotes can be one of the sweeter tricks up the sleeves of good talkers, they can as easily be the ultimate ammunition of bores, and often are. A Mrs. Warne-Cornish, when cornered by a bore telling a lengthy anecdote, was known to grasp him by the arm, lead him to a desk, and tell him, "It's so good, you must write it down." Eugen Weber has remarked that "a history of boredom would have much to tell," and much of it, it may well be, would be told in interminable anecdotes by men too confident of their charm. Even the best anecdotes ought not be too long, and anecdotes told about oneself ought perhaps be briefest of all.

"The evidence," social scientists have been known to say, "is purely anecdotal," which is meant as a put-down and a signal for dismissal, denoting something unscientific, unscholarly, trivial. But those among us who hold the anecdote in greater regard might be interested to learn, as I did not long ago from Robert Conquest, that defenders of the Soviet Union, even in its darkest days, used to dismiss the testimony of such writers as Boris Pasternak, Nadezhda Mandelstam, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn as "merely anecdotal," and thus not to be taken seriously. The "anecdotal" was posed against the "documentary," which meant the statistics and accounts given out by the Soviet government. On the same occasion, Robert Conquest said that his Russian friends in the Soviet Union could understand why their fellow Russians wished to lie about the conditions of life there—they, after all, faced serious deprivation and even death for telling the truth—but could never understand why so many writers in the West wished to lie about the Soviet Union. But then this, too, I suppose, is an anecdote.

"I have an answer, I have an answer," cried the yeshiva boy, running through the streets of his village. "Does anybody have a question?" I sometimes feel like a grown-up version of that boy, who, in my case, is crying out, "I have an anecdote, I have an anecdote. Does anybody have a conversation into which I might fit it?" E. M. Forster said that every writer has essentially one story to tell. But every man who fancies himself even slightly more than charmless has more than one anecdote to tell. He may have a dozen or more, which, over a long life, he may tell forty or sixty or even a hundred times. Your true anecdotalist knows not of restraint; repetition, to him no deterrent, is viewed chiefly as an opportunity for further polishing. He will take advantage of any opening to insert into conversation one of his gems, as he thinks of them, with only the least invitation or excuse. Nothing for it, I fear, short of an anecdectomy.

I wrote "every man" in the previous paragraph. I hope the gender wardens have not called out the pronoun police to pick me up for having done so. But my own experience reveals men to be more frequent anecdotalists than women. I have known women who tell anecdotes exceedingly well, but I have never known a woman who tells them regularly. Doubtless in olden days, when in upper-class English and American homes women went off, leaving men to their cigars and port, they had much more interesting things to convey to one another out of male hearing than warmed-over anecdotes. Women do not seem to have the same interest as men do in a certain kind of embellishment, exaggeration, artistic lying—those talents required by the true anecdotalist. Clifton Fadiman, in his excellent anthology *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes*, laments that his collection is "sadly deficient in anecdotes about women," and he speculates that this can be accounted for perhaps because literature has until fairly recently been largely written by men. Much truth to that, but I suspect, too, that this paucity is owing to a sense of good breeding in many women that did not allow them to tell anecdotes or to serve as grist for them. On this point, Mr. Fadiman, in his introduction, quotes Edith Head saying of Grace Kelly, "Grace doesn't allow anecdotes to happen to her."

Some while ago I informed a friend that I am an early riser. Ah, he asked, as if warming his hands before a non-existent fire, did I know the story about the Austrian playwright (of whose name I had never heard and have since forgot)? It seems that he happened to see an accident and was called in to be a witness in a trial that was to begin at 9:30 A.M. The playwright, being a man about town, a midnight-supper man, had never awoken before noon in his adult life. He missed the trial not once but thrice, each time causing the

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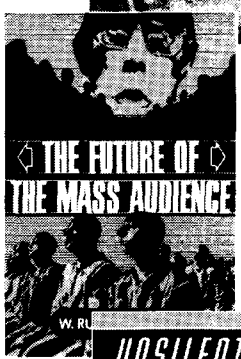

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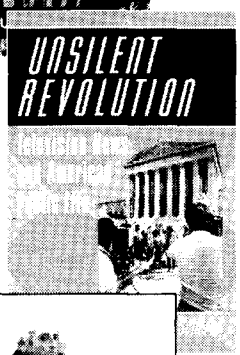

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proceedings to be delayed. Finally the judge, in anger, wrote to the playwright to inform him that, should he again miss performing his duty as a witness, he would be held in contempt of court, from which serious penalties would follow. Altering his schedule, the playwright retired earlier than usual the night before the appointed court date, and, not without struggle, arose, prepared his toilet, and at 9:00 A.M. opened the door of his town house leading onto the street. When he noted the street athrong with people, he was astounded. "Amazing!" he muttered to himself. "So many people on the street at this hour. Who would have guessed that in this city there were so many witnesses?"

A nice little story, I think. Not least, I admired my friend's tact in placing it so adeptly into our conversation. Shortly thereafter he, my friend, died, and not long after that I met another friend of his, and we condoled with each other about how we should miss him. "He was a great storyteller," this man averred. "You must know that story of his about there being so many witnesses on the street." He then told me other of our now-deceased friend's stories, and I had to allow that I knew them, too, including one that involved a splendid imitation of Sir Isaiah Berlin. Plainly, we were talking about an established repertoire of successful anecdotes that a bachelor, as our dead friend was, used to help pay his social way when dining out. (Hence the meaning of the phrase, which I did not understand when many years ago I first heard it, "dining out on a story.") My dear friend's performance was superior; his bill was marked paid in full in our home and, my guess is, in every other where he was a guest.

All anecdotes ought to be interesting, and the better ones also qualify as amusing, in the loose sense of the word. Not all need be humorous, though increasingly they have become so. In the *Thesaurus of Anecdotes,* Edmund Fuller remarks: "Today the true anecdote is still the counterpart of the parable and fable. Time has tended to shorten it somewhat and, as an attribute of our temperament, we have made it often funny." My own taste runs to anecdotes that have a bittersweet twist. Isaac D'Israeli, in defense of anecdotes as a form that truth can take, says that "opinions are fallible, but not examples," which seems to me a very clever observation. Not many anecdotes give more pleasure than those that show opinion and action in serious conflict. Surely, I am not alone in having a taste for those anecdotes that highlight people caught in the web of their own pretensions: the liberal politician with his children enrolled in expensive private schools, the psychologist whose three marriages have not turned out well, the official prude met grinning on the steps of the bordello in Macao.

Good anecdotes often catch famous people out in weaknesses to which they wouldn't wish to own up; they demonstrate their ignorance or vanity or impossible self-importance, and they usually have a nice touch of comeuppance at the close. A friend not long ago told me an anecdote about the playwright Harold Pinter, who occasionally also writes less than impressive poems. Usually he makes copies of these poems and sends them to thirty or so friends, then sits patiently back to await their praise. According to the anecdote, he had apparently written such a poem about the famous English cricketer Len Hutton, which, in its entirety, read:

> I knew Len Hutton in his prime.
> Another time, another time.

Pinter, the anecdote goes, waited fully two weeks for a response, but none was forthcoming. Finally, able to wait no longer, Pinter called up one of the people to whom he had sent the poem. He claimed that he was concerned about its arrival, the mails being so unreliable, as everyone knows they now are. Did this man receive the poem? Pinter wanted to know. "Actually," the fellow said, "I received it ten days ago." What did he think of the poem? Pinter wondered. "Actually," the poor fellow said, "I haven't quite finished it."

A lovely little anecdote, I think, but it wouldn't be anywhere near so good if it didn't have a name attached to it, and it is all the better for having a recognizable name. If it were an anecdote about an unnamed poet or obscure playwright, it would, I suppose, be faintly amusing, but only faintly. Another example illustrates the same point. I was not long ago talking with a friend, who has been much closer to the working of government than I, about those congressmen and senators who have real power as opposed to those who are very good at gaining attention for themselves in the press and on television. My

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friend then told me that he was once, at a dinner, seated next to a powerful but not especially well known congressman from Brooklyn named John Rooney, whom he asked about the performance in the Congress of John Lindsay, who had by then gone on to be mayor of New York. "I would describe John Lindsay's record in Congress," Rooney said, "as no hits, no runs, no errors. And the reason he made no errors," he added, "is that he never got near the ball." Good stuff, but, again, much less good if unconnected to an actual name.

Not all anecdotes need be, implicitly, put-downs, deflating and diminishing the pompous and the putatively great. Some anecdotes are stories of pluck in the face of misfortune or of acts of moral elegance. Many anecdotes about Winston Churchill seem to be of this kind, though many others have to do with accounts of his brilliant repartee. Displays of repartee and spontaneous wit themselves often make for mini-anecdotes. Anecdotes about Babe Ruth are mainly about his feats of eating and dancing between the sheets and about the comedy brought about by his candor. When once asked if he was interested in any one character in history—Lincoln, Washington, and Napoleon were mentioned—he said that he couldn't say, since he had never met any of those guys, which, when one comes to think about it, isn't so stupid. The rebarbative personality of W. C. Fields, who, as Kenneth Tynan once said, "played straight man to a malevolent universe," was powerfully productive of anecdote, most of which derived from his wicked tongue. "And how," Fields once said on camera to Mae West, "is my little brood mare?"

But then some people are more anecdotable than others. Outsized personalities—Bismarck, Sarah Bernhardt, Charlie Parker—tend to generate anecdotes almost as a condition of their being. Stick around one such person long enough, as James Boswell learned to his everlasting fame, and you will have anecdotes in more than sufficient supply, for the good reason that what such people say and do is so often amusing, odd, outrageous, penetrating, charming, foolish, vain, significant—all the things that make for good anecdotes.

Henry James was perhaps the most highly anecdotable among writers of the relatively recent past. Nearly everyone who met him brought away an anecdote or a scrap that, with a touch or two of artful embellishment, could be turned into one. Whether it was something witty or profound or absurd, James seemed to leave everyone who met him with a literary souvenir. One thinks of James saying, in response to Edith Wharton's telling him that the grand automobile they were sitting in was purchased in part from the royalties of her last novel, that he had bought a wheelbarrow with the royalties from his last novel and intended to have it painted with the royalties from his next.

Oddly, James did not himself tell many anecdotes, though he could be a severe critic of badly told ones. Ford Madox Ford, whose truth quotient wasn't always the highest, recounted a story of Henry James imitating Mr. William Rossetti telling, and telling badly, of witnessing Herbert Spencer propose marriage to George Eliot. After mimicking the absurdly stiff way in which the anecdote was told, James remarked: "Is that the way to tell *that* story?" Doubtless James did not himself tell many anecdotes because he used all such material for his own stories and novels. There is a moderately well known story about James abruptly leaving a London dinner party during someone's telling an anecdote that he thought might be useful to him—he left precisely at the point in the anecdote where he felt it would be best for him not to hear more, so that his imagination could fill in the rest. This is in part corroborated by his friend Violet Hunt recounting how she "used to suffer, as other people did who told him anything that might amuse him, from the summarily truncated anecdote. He would hold up a story as soon as he had got all he needed out of it; extend a finger—'Thank you, I've got as much—all I want'—and leave you with the point of your anecdote on your hands."

Can it be that great men and women do not tell anecdotes because they recognize that their purpose is to furnish the material for the anecdotes of others? Exceptions exist: Virgil Thomson claimed that "Stravinsky is always shaping great man stories about himself," though the job must have been made easier owing to Stravinsky's having been very nearly a great man in fact. Still, when Napoleon met Goethe and announced, "*Voilà un homme!*" it must have been a third party, not Napoleon or Goethe, who told the story. The one striking exception I can think of to the rule that the great do not usually indulge in anecdote tell-

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ing is Abraham Lincoln, who had a genuine love for it. In Carl Sandburg's biography of Lincoln, a Pittsfield, Illinois, woman named Susan Scanland says of Lincoln, who was then still a lawyer: "The laziest man there ever was, good for nothing except to tell stories." In the Illinois state legislature, Lincoln, to make a point, would on occasion say, "I beg leave to tell an anecdote," and then, usually quite winningly, do so. A good many anecdotes have apparently been falsely attributed to Lincoln. But Lincoln anecdotes, it must be said, tend to be close to parables, usually, even when amusing, carrying a moral freight heavier than most anecdotalists usually want to tote around or than most anecdotes can bear.

Men of action don't tend to tell anecdotes, partly for reasons of temperament, partly because anecdotes are generally considered small talk and hence beneath them, though I myself consider a well-told anecdote a minor work of art and thus, if small talk it be, then small talk carried to the highest power. Perhaps, though, this is why those writers who have wished to bill themselves as men of action—in our century they include André Malraux, Ernest Hemingway, and, at a much reduced level, Norman Mailer—have always seemed slightly unbelievable, if not actually comic, when doing so. In the second volume of his autobiography, Anthony Burgess remarks that, at a certain point in his life, he "was too much preoccupied with living my own life to invent lives for others." Something to it. Those who truly do, needn't really tell; and when they do tell, they seem a bit diminished by doing so.

I remember, as a student at a party at the University of Chicago, hearing about a small and bespectacled American graduate student who asked a tall Nigerian student with an Oxford accent what it was like to hunt lion. The graduate student went on at great length, beseeching the Nigerian to tell him what it was like, standing there, while this magnificent beast, intent on your death, powerful paws pounding down on the dry African plain, the two of you alone under the boiling sun, the lion fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, now only ten yards away, ten yards between you and death—what, good God, he wanted to know, was it like? "Had you been there, Mr. Slotnik," replied the Nigerian, in splendidly enunciated English, "I daresay you'd have wet your pants."

I used to tell that anecdote fairly often, even though it wasn't quite mine to tell. I used also to tell an anecdote about a man named Severn Darden, who was a University of Chicago campus character some six or seven years before I arrived at the school. (Darden, along with Mike Nichols and Elaine May, was one of the leading figures in the Compass Players, the cabaret company that became known as Second City; he later had a number of tertiary roles in the movies, but was never allowed in the movies to do anything so winning as his own cabaret improvisations.) Darden dressed the part of a character; heavyset, he had one of the country's early unkempt beards and often went about wearing a cape. The cape had a significant role in the anecdote. As the anecdote goes, Severn Darden was, in the cool of an autumn evening, strolling about the university's main quadrangle, reflecting on the vicissitudes of life as he languidly tossed rocks through the windows of the university's ersatz Gothic buildings. Two of the university's security policemen, an older and not a physically impressive duo, caught him in the act and, attempting to apprehend him, gave chase. Darden lit out—with his bulk, one imagines not very swiftly—for nearby Rockefeller Chapel. Up the nave of the immense chapel Darden ran, the elderly security cops not so much hotly as perhaps tepidly in pursuit; he hopped up on the altar, drew his cape back across his mouth and nose, and, in the voice of a broken-down Shakespearean actor, croaked out, "Sanctuary, sanctuary, sanctuary."

I have no idea whether or not this ever really happened. I never met Severn Darden and so never confirmed its truth. But I told it as if it were true. I told it exclusively to people who had not gone to the university. I told it because I thought it not only funny in itself—I still find it mildly amusing—but because it gave a good bit of color to life among the gray Gothic at the University of Chicago, which, as I realize now, needed it. So, too, did I need a bit of color in those days—as an undergraduate in that primarily graduate institution, my own position was akin to that of an intellectual tourist—and I think that, in telling exotic anecdotes about the University of Chicago, I was hoping that some of the color I attempted to infuse into university life would rub off onto me. I am fairly sure that none did. I am not even sure that anyone believed such an-

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ecdotes or found them in the least interesting. But I felt the need to tell them nevertheless. Life, like the show, must go on, even if one is forced to half make it up.

Still, my telling these anecdotes marked a demotion in my emotional life. Before this I had been someone about whom anecdotes were told; or when I myself told an anecdote, I was usually somewhere attractively near the center of the action. Truth to tell, I did what I could to help this along. If I had some minor exploit to my credit, I added a touch of coloring to it in the telling where needed; I made sure word of it got around; and if the story came back to me even better than my own touch-ups had rendered it, well, I let it stand. Did I, as an adolescent, do somewhat outrageous things with a sense that, the more outrageous they were, the more readily anecdotable they were likely to become? I believe I did. If, as I sensed long before I read it, all the world's a stage, I felt it best to begin as soon as possible designing my own part and contrived early to do so.

I regaled friends with accounts of slipping out of the house to join an all-night poker game, of being caught in flagrante delicto by suburban police in the back seat of a cream-colored with green trim 1954 Chevy Bel Air, of going to two racetracks in the same day, of a wildly illicit friendship with an impressively devious teacher. I turned these events and incidents into anecdotes that, I like to think even now, nearly forty years later, were not without their small artful touches. I had the good sense not to build myself up too much in these stories, for the audience of my friends was a wary and highly critical one, and going too far could be punished. One boy who went to school with us was given, to go with his penchant for exaggeration, the nickname of Uncle Remus, after Joel Chandler Harris's teller of fairy-tale parables, which he was forced to carry through his school days, and it was no light load. In my own anecdotes, I always made sure to add many comic details, both for verisimilitude and for sheer entertainment. I wanted nothing more than to be thought to have a remarkable life, and the most efficient way of obtaining this reputation was, through the subtleties of storytelling, to create one for myself.

I could, of course, be quite deceived about the effect of my youthful performance. It may well be that, with my handful of stories, I was even then thought a bore, possibly a liar, maybe someone too eager to please. But I don't think so. I think my anecdotes, designed to seem neither self-aggrandizing nor hopelessly exaggerated, came off fairly well. When I embellished, invented details—"God is in the details," Miës van der Rohe is supposed to have said, but not in those of my youthful anecdotes He wasn't—shaped, and polished my rough experience into anecdotes with which I hoped to enrapture my friends, I was, quite without realizing it, setting the trap for the man I would later become. I would henceforth become someone whose life seemed organized for the manufacture of fresh anecdotes. Ever after I would become one of those odd people who take their task on earth to be not to live life but to tell, or actually retell, it. Chekhov knew a thing or two about this strange condition, and into the mouth of the writer Trigorin, a character in *The Seagull*, he put these words:

> Oh, it's a crazy sort of life! . . . Do you see that cloud? Looks remarkably like a grand piano, doesn't it? The moment I saw it, I thought, I mustn't forget to mention somewhere in my story that a cloud looking like a grand piano sailed across the sky. . . . I snap up every word, every sentence you or I utter, just for the sake of locking them away in my literary lumber room. . . . And so it goes on and on. I feel that I am devouring my own life.

A friend, a lawyer, recently told me that he is bored blue listening to other lawyers tell anecdotes about their cases. He is bored listening to himself retell stories about his own cases. "I'm ready to wipe the hard disk clean," he said. But then every occupation—law, medicine, politics—has its own ample fund of anecdotes. Alas, the people with the best source of anecdotes—psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and others in the head trades—are supposed to keep them to themselves. For the most part, I am sure that they do. Still, the motto of psychology, as W. H. Auden once remarked, ought to be "Have you heard this one?" One I had never heard before was told to me by a psychiatrist I scarcely knew, with whom I was talking about memory lapses. It concerned a patient of his, a female gynecologist, who told him that she had lost the capacity to remember any of her patients' names and could only call these names up through recognition of their private parts. Fantastico!—to put it very mildly.

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In lines of work where temperament is given relatively free rein—in opera, music, the theater—where egoism runs rampant and adulation is handed out in triple scoops, the incidence of memorable anecdote is especially high. It will come as no surprise that there are books of anecdotes devoted to all these occupations just as there are books of anecdotes about royalty and about writers (two other ego-heavy occupations). There is as yet, so far as I know, no *Oxford Book of Plumbing Anecdotes*, though doubtless the material for such a book is there in abundance.

I am glad that books of anecdotes exist, without particularly wishing to read through any of them. They are rather like collections of jokes—too much of a good thing—and even when one comes to them with what one supposed was a serious appetite for anecdote, one discovers oneself fairly quickly sated. Used too patently in journalism—"In Klamath Falls, Oregon, last week a man sued his left leg"—as I thought they were in the news magazines before I stopped reading them, anecdotes seem dopey at best, a ridiculous falsity at worst. To succeed an anecdote requires an air of spontaneity, even if that air is slightly fraudulent.

"Of conversation as I love it," wrote Evelyn Waugh in *The Loved One*, "with anecdote occurring spontaneously and aptly, jokes growing and taking shape, fantasy—they [Americans] know nothing." A hard man, Evelyn Waugh, and not least hard on us Yankees. But I suppose he has to be forgiven for supplying, through his own life, a rich fund of anecdotes. Most of these had to do with his uttering some deliciously witty, or devastatingly outrageous, remark, such as the following: when, as a captain in the British Army during World War II, he came out of his foxhole during a German aerial bombardment in Yugoslavia, he was supposed to have looked up at the sky and declared, "Like all things German, this is vastly overdone."

"Remarks aren't literature," Gertrude Stein once said to Ernest Hemingway. But remarks, intrinsically clever and well-enough placed, can in themselves constitute anecdotes. Almost every Samuel Goldwynism seems a self-contained anecdote: "I am willing to admit I may not always be right," he once told one of his subalterns, "but I am never wrong," and, the odd thing is, I believe I know what he meant. When Bruno Walter went to visit Gustav Mahler at his new country house, Walter looked up, enchanted, at the nearby mountains. "Don't trouble yourself," Mahler said, "I've already composed all that." That may seem only an amusing remark, but I think it qualifies as an anecdote because it contains, in such brief compass, so much information: about the parties involved, about rivalry among artists, about artistic creation.

I myself like to quote the remarks of people I have known who are now dead, where the remarks themselves seem to have the kind of point that qualifies as anecdotal, for they serve the double purpose of amusing the listener and bringing these people, however briefly, back to life. "The least expensive way to acquire a book," Arnaldo Momigliano once said to me apropos of books given to one by their authors, "remains to buy it," by which he meant that, if you bought a book, at least you didn't have to read it. "That's nice," my mother said to me a long while ago when I told her that I had recently been given a teaching position at Northwestern University, "a job in the neighborhood." At a meeting at which I sat next to the greatly Teutonic conductor of opera, Kurt Herbert Adler, he leaned next to me and whispered something, of which I could only make out the word "lozenges." I handed him a pack of Lifesavers I happened to have on me, which he turned down politely with the reply, "I zed Los Angeles." I once had some editorial business with the economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron. I told him that I would shortly be sending him galley proofs of an essay he had written. "I shouldn't worry about it," he said coolly. "I'll probably be dead by the time you have them." And he was. This, I believe, constitutes an anecdote.

One of the problems with remarks as anecdotes is that of misattribution. Clifton Fadiman is surely correct when he says that a great many mots and joky incidents either never happened or were "fathered on notables." He cites in this regard many of the splendid put-down retorts attributed to Dorothy Parker, Oscar Levant, and Groucho Marx. Along with misattribution must be placed misappropriation. Someone once reported to me that a man we both knew had said that the three most overrated things in life were home cooking, marital sex, and Princeton, which I thought very funny. When I repeated it to someone

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else, he said, "Oh, I heard that one years ago, only then it was Harvard."

It may be that misattribution, misappropriation, near-total expropriation are in the very nature of the anecdotal enterprise. One does what one can with the material at hand. A reviewer of Kingsley Amis's *Memoirs* noted that "one gets the distinct impression that many of these anecdotes have been carefully squirreled away for decades awaiting this opportunity for airing." In his book Amis all but concedes the point, practically embraces it, when he writes that his "attention and emphasis tend to go to those people and those characteristics of theirs that are suitable to an anecdotal or at least a narrative approach, as in a novel."

Clifton Fadiman calls anecdotes "the thistledown for biography," which it most certainly is. Parson Weems's famous biography of George Washington, after all, carries the lengthy title of *The Life of George Washington with Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honorable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countrymen.* But anecdotes into the bargain can also supply the seed, planted in the right soil, out of which the flower of art can grow. I was at a small dinner party recently when, after dessert, the host, a fine talker, was stirred by something one of his guests had said to mention that this reminded him of a story. He began: "Sernoff, who was then head of the KGB in London, met with the head man at Scotland Yard, whom he asked, 'How many Jews are there in England?' " I felt I was listening to Somerset Maugham; I was transported; this was no doubt a true story, but it was also art.

Not long after, I had lunch with someone with whom I had gone to high school, who reported to me that a friend of his who went to our school—but who was not someone I had known well—reported to him that, more than thirty years after high school, he had had a brief love affair with a girl (now woman) about whom we all fantasized in those adolescent days. She was a girl who was not only beautiful but notably kind. He, this fellow, had not had a markedly successful life, and this seemed to be a great high point in it. Being told the story, I felt a bit like Henry James at that London dinner he so swiftly departed. I wanted to leave before I heard more, for in this anecdote resided a lovely short story, but to have done so—we were in a restaurant—would have been to have stuck my lunch companion with the check, which would, I fear, only have resulted in an anecdote about my cheapness.

Perhaps the best anecdote in history is the story of Antony and Cleopatra. It has everything: high stakes, big names, sex. All that is missing is humor. But then no anecdote can have everything. As any student of anecdotes instinctively knows, that is one of the fine things about them. If anecdotes are a form of knowledge—about the zaniness of human behavior, about the shocking stupidity as well as the startling intelligence of people, about our irrationality, our unpredictability, our hopeless comicality—then it is a form of knowledge that is cumulative and yet without end. If anecdotes teach anything at all, it is probably that it is best never to think we know the last word about any human heart, not even our own.

Which reminds me of the time. . . .

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Dialogues with the Dead

CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN

MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER'S EIGHTH PREGNANCY was a difficult one. After all, she was nearly forty-eight years old when it began. Of her five living children (two others having died in infancy), the two oldest, my grandfather and his sister Marie, were already in their mid-teens. Contrary to what might have been expected, however, she carried the fetus to term and in the autumn of 1896 gave birth to a healthy boy who would live through most of the following century. Her own prognosis was not so fortunate. Never fully recovered from the birth of her final child, after twenty-one months she knew she was dying. Moreover, she knew only too well that her grief-stricken husband—"not a good provider," in the language of the day—would be hard-pressed to maintain an infant and three other small children, whatever help the oldest son, now at work but eager to enlist in the Spanish-American War, might provide. She was, like her husband, an immigrant. Her own family was far away.

Promise me, she said to her daughter Marie in German, *promise me that you will keep the family together and raise your brother Charlie.* What could a late-nineteenth-century girl say to such an appeal? Besides, she adored her mother. *Mama*, she answered inevitably, *I promise.* In that world, that was how they did things. What is more, they sometimes meant it. My great-aunt Marie kept the family together, raised her brother Charlie, and, for good measure, helped raise his children and grandchildren. She never married and lived to be ninety-eight. When Charlie died a few years before she did, she felt reasonably enough that life had become absurd and that it was high time to depart. Her final wish was to be buried in the grave of her mother, to whom she had so spectacularly kept a promise made eighty-one years earlier, and with whom she had so long carried on a dialogue that furnished the pattern for an entire life. Near the end of 1979, the customs of the late twentieth century grudgingly yielded to the sentiments of the nineteenth, and the ancient grave was reopened for its second occupant.

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The communication of the dead, according to T. S. Eliot, is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living. Death has freed them to tell us things they had no words for in life. Being dead, they presumably do not mind what shapes we impose on them. All the same, they have their revenge: by admitting their influence through dialogue with them, we impose lasting shapes and obligations on ourselves as well. The dead can strengthen and steady us; they can also drive us crazy. People in superstitious ages imagined ghosts to explain their sense of being haunted, of involuntarily carrying on transactions with those who had died. In more modern language, our conversations with the dead are the ultimate form of projection, in which we define ourselves most revealingly and recognize, consciously or not, our actual status in the world. Whether or not we choose to be buried in the same grave, there is after all that perfect bond of death between the generations.

According to Dr. Milton Helpern, former chief medical examiner of New York City, death is "the irreversible cessation of life. Death may be due to a wide variety of diseases and disorders, but in every case the underlying physiological cause is a breakdown in the body's oxygen cycle." Law, if not medicine, distinguishes rigorously between death from natural causes, accident, homicide, or suicide. So do the survivors; our dialogue with someone who has been murdered is quite different in tone and substance from our colloquy with one who died of heart disease. Much depends also on the age at death. Like cause of death, the age at which one's oxygen cycle breaks down communicates a definite view of the universe to the living. In contemporary America we hold far fewer dialogues with dead children than took place in centuries when infant mortality was a frequent guest in every family, and the death of someone who failed to live out a normal life span is a correspondingly more powerful cause of grief and bitterness. We tend to feel that such a person has been the victim of an outrage. In many ritualistic or traditional cultures, on the other hand, "to be a dead member of one's society is the individual's ultimate social status," according to John Middleton—*ultimate* meaning not only final but highest. Such societies find it easier, at least abstractly, to accept the inevitability of deaths at many ages and to maintain an equable dialogue with their vanished members, although that acceptance does not necessarily lessen either the grief or the extravagance of its expression.

"Must I remember?" the extravagantly grieving Hamlet asks himself reprovingly two months after the untimely death of his father. Memory of the dead is of course the beginning of dialogue with them, a dialogue usually commenced with the rituals of funeral and commitment to the earth. In Hamlet's case, as in many modern ones, the ritual has been foreshortened, with the predictable consequence that memory and

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dialogue acquire an unhealthy power over the survivors. This power is all the greater for being unanticipated. For we address the dead constantly if they were close to us; and if they had a powerful effect on us in life, they answer. Oh yes, they talk back, make demands, insist on undivided attention. Raise my family, share my grave—these are benign exigencies. Too often, the ghost demands revenge.

> Remember thee?
> Aye, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
> In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
> That youth and observation copied there,
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmixed with baser matter.

How to converse with a ghost who demands vengeance? To adopt its wishes as one's own is to become possessed, whether the ghost's name is Hamlet the elder, or Moses, or Mohammed; whether the essence of its demand is to kill the usurper or repossess the land he took. Share my grave. To deny the ghost, on the other hand, may involve such a renunciation of one's own identity as to be nearly impossible—and the ghost will still be there in any event, as dead as ever. Falling between two stools, as Hamlet did, may be the worst of all choices: as in the play, it may simply widen the power of the ghost to encompass other fates besides that of the individual possessed, leaving the family and the state in ruins and Horatio alone to tell the tale. But possession rarely involves much choice.

Hamlet, in the opinion of many critics, is a modern figure trapped in an archaic drama: a man not given to believing ghosts or committing bloody acts of revenge. That is his tragedy. The enlightened mind becomes genuinely unhinged when faced with such demands, or with such a demander. Ghosts, after all, are written into plays to entertain the groundlings, whose benighted state makes them more susceptible to haunting. Although groundlings still exist and ghosts are still created for them—television and Hollywood give ample recent instances—the dead, whether friendly or hateful, hold no dialogues with the truly modern mind. We have learned to outgrow all that. Life is for the living; the healthy mind looks to the future. We cremate the dead and scatter their ashes, dissolving not only the spirit but the material body itself into thin air. There is no grave to share. Nobody can haunt us.

"A ghost in search of vengeance," asks the ghostly narrator of Robertson Davies's novel *Murther & Walking Spirits*—"what is it to do in such a world as ours?"

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The ghost, of course, was really Hamlet's unconscious speaking. Self-assertion and the desire for revenge, muddled up with Oedipal longings for his sexually accomplished mother, projected themselves quite naturally onto the image of the dead father, who then walked the stage as a ghost. Of course. The word *psychology* would not be invented for another two centuries. We know how to understand the character Hamlet and the play itself not just differently but better than any Elizabethan. In a sense, that is perfectly true. How important that sense may be is more debatable. In Shaw's *Saint Joan*, an indisputably modern play, the title character is informed that the voices of long-dead saints who talk to her are in fact the product of her imagination. "Of course," she answers unabashedly. "That is how the messages of God come to us." To take the ghost out of its shadowy existence in the world and enshrine it in the mind only increases its power, unless the implication is that understanding the true *locus* of the haunting somehow dispels it. Clearly it does no such thing. The dead whose final resting place is in our mind are no less potent than those who are assumed to keep an unquiet vigil in the world of space. Real ghosts could appear only at certain times and places, and they could be exorcised. Psychological ghosts, even of the friendly dead, have no such limitations. Once our dead are buried within us, they can stay there for as long as we live—longer insofar as the patterns they embody are passed on through us to others by way of upbringing or genetic inheritance. Ignoring them is no solution. The less we hold dialogue with them, the more unruly their effect on us becomes. We can never get away from a voice that lives inside us.

Sometimes the voices within are collective and historical rather than individual as are the ghosts of our private dead. My father-in-law was a career naval officer who served as a carrier pilot during World War II. Like a surprising number of American officers in that war, he was the grandson of a Confederate veteran and half-consciously saw his own war as a prolongation of his grandfather's, not in terms of the issues involved but rather as an opportunity to vindicate an honorable defeat by winning an even greater struggle eighty years later. Somehow the significance of the past could be changed by valor in the present, not exactly avenging a loss but perhaps removing the shame or sting of it. Although this particular way of looking at World War II was restricted to a small part of a single generation, the habit of seeing a current series of events in the light of the Civil War was not. Much of twentieth-century American history involves a dialogue with the ghosts of the Civil War, a conflict in which more Americans died than in all our other wars combined. If the Civil Rights movement had in some respects to defeat the ghosts of the Confederacy all over again, it also drew strength from the black heroes

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of Fort Wagner and many another battle a hundred years before. The ghost of Abraham Lincoln, the commander in chief, remains the most potent figure in American history, now reinforced by that of Martin Luther King, Jr.

In the last year of his life, when his eyesight and many other things were failing, my father-in-law asked my wife to read him long stretches from Shelby Foote's narrative history of the Civil War as a preparation for death. It was not that he had any wish to refight the war, still less that he expected Stonewall Jackson to meet him on the threshold of Valhalla with an entrance examination. He was a modern man with, for the most part, modern beliefs. No, it was rather that having (again like many Southern men of his generation) lived in the shadow of these events all his life, he wished to be as clear as possible about them before he died. There were lessons to be learned about living and dying; this seemed the best available way for him to learn them. What the dead had to say now was very different from what they had communicated forty or sixty years ago. One last long conversation with the ghosts, perhaps, and then he would be ready to join them. The Crater was the battle he liked to hear about most, but there was nothing bloodthirsty or sentimental in his reactions. Rather he was closing a circle that had begun when he first heard about Southern victories and defeats in childhood, preparing for death in a way that was appropriate to the life he had lived, like a cheerful stoic.

"Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me," wrote Walt Whitman in 1865, commemorating Lincoln and the dead of the Civil War,

> And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
> And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
> I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not . . .

Because he had so thoughtfully assimilated himself to the dead at the end of his life, and because, in the almost forgotten phrase, he was full of years, the ghost of my father-in-law is a quiet one, a familiar daily presence that inspires and does not disturb.

Early death is something else again. To die with manifest unfulfilled promise, to leave grieving parents behind, seems a violation of the natural order. These dead, if we were close to them, are the object not just of mourning but of shock and guilt, as though we should have been able to foresee and prevent. They speak of inconsolable loss, and a long time must pass before we can hear anything else they have to say.

The Boston cancer specialists thought they had cured my brother of lymphoma not once but twice. A political scientist of great talents, he

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had had a somewhat unlucky career, owing to the depressed academic job market of the seventies and, after he had gone into government, the change of administrations in 1981. But he had begun to work his way back, interrupted by chemotherapy and a marrow transplant, and had even managed to complete a book on nuclear proliferation in which many publishers expressed interest. A few days after he signed a contract for its publication, his doctor informed him that he had at most three months to live.

We drove up to visit him immediately. When we arrived he was in the hospital, but they discharged him after a few days. Perhaps there was hope—perhaps new therapies as yet untried—There are doctors and there are doctors. One of them was optimistic. My sister-in-law pretended to believe, but there was no hope, really, and my brother was full of bitterness. It was not *Why me?* It sounded more like *Why now?* Why not earlier or later? He was anxious for his family in a way that only someone with a deep capacity for happiness, a beloved eight-year-old son, and hardly any life insurance can be. That anxiety was the strongest note in everything he said.

It would be pointless to give details of the conversations we had with him then, or later by telephone. All of them were like conversations with someone who is already dead, who is looking back from the other side and seeing something quite different from the other people in the room. How does one discuss plans for the future of a widow and her son when her young husband is the most determined of the discussers? From a great distance he watched us sadly as we talked about mortgages, school fees, the raising of a child in which he would have no further living part to play. From whatever place he now inhabited, he pressed all the right questions, asked for and received all the right promises from everyone, unerringly noticed every feature of the situation that would soon face his survivors. Unwilling to die but perceiving no alternative, he expressed in his speech and actions an equal mixture of courage and anger. Eventually the anger faded, leaving only sorrow, courage, and deep concern for the two who needed him most.

"There must be wisdom with great Death," Tennyson wrote after the death of another young man: "The dead shall look me through and through." My brother unwillingly put his house in order, made such peace as he could, and died on an afternoon in early summer, the three months proving in the end to be thirty-eight days. At the funeral his father and two of his brothers were pallbearers, while his mother sat among the mourners, and I felt that whatever was in the casket was looking us through and through.

A depressing story, certainly, though far from a unique one in this or any other century. What kinds of dialogue will follow such a death? Of

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course it's too early to say. Like those of a true ghost, my brother's purposes must be fulfilled in the lives of others, in contrast to those of most people who live to what is thought to be a normal age. For the time being, he is an unquiet ghost who speaks only of loss and incompletion, who asks only about his wife and son and can be answered only with reassurances. Later on he will have other things to tell those who knew him, and they will speak to him less frantically. He was a much-loved person, not only by his family, and the value of his legacy—and consequently the richness of the dialogues in which he will participate while those who loved him are still alive—will be very great. The scope of those dialogues, like everything else in which the living take part, is unpredictable.

In a sense, any remembered dead person eventually says to us: *I lived in a different time, subject to different pressures, part of a story that has now, if not ended, at least reached a different stage, with different characters.* And later still, if anyone is around to hear: *Even if I had lived a normal life, I would be dead now.* Beyond that, is everything they tell us projection? Perhaps, in a way. If so, it is projection of a very special kind, in which by virtue of their being dead we find ourselves extended far beyond our everyday limits of understanding and learn things about ourselves and our world that no living person could tell us. In these strange dialogues, the dead do indeed look us through and through.

Many survivors of the Final Solution feel that they carry the dead within them, an unbearable burden of guilt and remembrance. Here the conversation with the dead, who may include all the members of one's family, must surely reach the limits of possibility. Those who survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki tell a slightly different version: they sense that they carry death itself inside them. Perhaps such extreme calamities offer one reason that our time is so reluctant to be reminded of death as the common fate or of any claims that the dead might have on the living.

> They used to pour millet on graves or poppy seeds
> To feed the dead who would come disguised as birds.
> I put this book here for you, who once lived
> So that you should visit us no more,

Czeslaw Milosz wrote in the ruined Warsaw of 1945. If we pay them too much or too little attention, the dead can eat us up.

Even to us ordinary people, the dead speak all the time. Willingly or not, we conduct endless dialogues with them. People who live in periods with no widely accepted way of visualizing the status and influence of the dead will invent new ones or try to revive old ones;

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hence the widespread half-beliefs in reincarnation and New Age varieties of spiritualism. On a more everyday level, the husband who has lost a wife, the wife who has lost a husband, says, *How could you do this to me?* The other answers, *I had no choice. I would much rather have gone to the beach with you as we planned.* And sometimes, *You should get out more.* And even, *You should remarry, for your own sake and the sake of the children.* Often enough, we do what the dead tell us.

Finally, it is the dead who tell us who we are, not just as individuals (though that too) but as a species of animals that needs reminding. They tell us constantly that life is a rough place and nobody gets out of it alive. Or as Montaigne put it, "Live as long as you please, you will strike nothing off the time you will have to spend dead." Our dialogue with the dead is a conversation between equals. As late-twentieth-century people, we tend to find this familiar news morbid and tasteless, like a Victorian funeral. After all, we make a fetish of youth and health, the unbounded liberation of the self from all forms of oppression, which must surely include the freedom not to die if we so choose. The impersonal objectivity of death is an affront to everything we want to believe.

That reaction only increases the power of the ghosts whom we try so hard, and with so little success, to confine in the safe, invisible place we call the dead past. But the ghosts tell us, either kindly or cruelly depending mostly on our willingness to hear, that they actually represent our future. Share my grave whether you will or not. That irrefutable announcement, which they are now free to speak, is the beginning of all the other things we can learn from them, and if we pretend not to hear it, the rest of what they have to say will be unintelligible.

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Letter from Serbia

MATTHEW STEVENSON

When we got back to our room in the hotel, my husband said, "All this is very sad. Men and women have died and lived for the ideal of Yugoslavia, the South Slav state; and here are these very charming people chafing with discontent at the realization of it. And so far as I can see, however bad Belgrade may be, they give it no chance to prove its merits. These people are born and trained rebels. They cry out when they see a government as if it were a poisonous snake, and seize a stick to kill it with, and in that they are not being fanciful. All the governments they have known till now have been, so far as they are concerned, poisonous snakes. But all the same that attitude would be a pity, if they happened to meet a government for once that was not a poisonous snake."

—Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1942)

IN ITS SCHEDULE, Air France lists a weekly flight from Nice to Dubrovnik. But in the autumn of 1990, when I was escorted onto the Tarmac that sweeps the shore of the Riviera, I found the markings of Jugoslovenski Aerotransport on the side of a dilapidated DC-9—the airline equivalent of putting plum brandy into old wine bottles. I was seated on the aisle in the first row, next to an off-duty pilot, and throughout the flight had a clear view of the cockpit. No sooner had we taken off than my seatmate bolted to the cabin, bummed a cigarette from the captain, and settled down on the armrest to spend the flight regaling the crew with his stories.

Although we were flying over the rough Italian spine and then down the azure coastline of the Yugoslav Adriatic, the conviviality of the pilots gave the flight the feel of a Mexican bus ride. As we landed in Dubrovnik, on a runway carved into barren hillsides, the deadheading captain kept pointing out the cockpit window, as if explaining where his sister lived or the beer was coldest. But there was nothing sinister about the bar-rail scene on the flight deck. In fact, I found it strangely

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comforting to know that men, not a computer and a disembodied voice, were flying the machine.

I was on my way to Yugoslavia to visit the Serbian village where my grandfather was born and to travel in the country during the year of its discontent. Although my grandfather died in 1973 when I was a freshman in college, it would be easy to write that I never knew him. In 1960, when I was five and he was eighty, he suffered a stroke that confined him to hospitals for the last thirteen years of his life. During that time I visited him often, but we never had a conversation about his life, what he had seen, the books that he had written, or the people that he knew. To a boy growing up in a Long Island suburb, and more involved with baseball and bicycles than a life that had begun in Serbia and was now ending in a New York state hospital, my grandfather belonged more to the house of the dead than to one of the living.

Despite the distance of our ages, I have always felt close to my grandfather. Whether deliberately or not, I followed his footsteps in magazines and business, at Columbia University, and abroad in Vienna and Geneva. In college I made a stab at learning Serbo-Croatian and after graduation visited Belgrade. And in 1990, when Yugoslavia started coming apart along its ethnic seams, I decided to travel there again. He always wanted Yugoslavia to flourish like Switzerland or the United States, countries that prospered despite national divisions, but I thought that he would have liked me to be a witness to the disintegration.

I began my trip in Dubrovnik, because in my grandfather's writing it stands for everything that is admirable in the Yugoslav mind. I also wanted several days by the sea, recovering from jet lag and reading Rebecca West's 1942 travelogue about Yugoslavia, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, which covers a thousand years of Yugoslav history in about the same number of pages. I had started it on numerous occasions, but had never gotten beyond page 124. On this trip I wanted her to be one of the narrators, and hoped a few days in a deck chair would get me going.

At first glance, from the airport road that does a catwalk along the coastal escarpment, Dubrovnik looks like an Italian village that has been towed across the Adriatic on a barge. Red-tile roofs, Renaissance bell towers, and medieval city walls appear anchored in the turquoise sea alongside the bulkhead of an ordinary Yugoslav town. Rebecca West found it "as precious as Venice," and said that it "should be visited for the first time when the twilight is about to fall, when it is already dusk under the tall trees that make an avenue to the city walls." And, in fact, after I had settled into the Hotel Argentina, which sits on a bluff overlooking the town, it was in the late afternoon that I wandered the streets of polished cobblestones feeling as if I were in a gondola.

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"A little republic," my grandfather wrote about Dubrovnik, "whose population did not surpass a few dozen thousands of inhabitants, produced from the end of the 15th century a relatively prodigious number of writers and savants, and a great majority of them of superior merit. . . ." I am sure everything about it appealed to him: its Renaissance charms, its literary tradition, its livelihood in trade, its political neutrality, and its symbolism as the prow of Yugoslavia pointed toward Western seas. The square mile of narrow lanes, trading houses, and writers' garrets was all that he wanted the rest of the country to emulate, and its senseless shelling in the civil war that was to follow would have confirmed his darkest fears about Yugoslavia's fate.

Rebecca West also loved the idea of Dubrovnik—a city-state of worthy artists and clever middlemen—but she found the twentieth-century version artificial. At one point she says to her husband, who serves as the book's literary straight man: "I can't bear Dubrovnik." She was searching for the Yugoslavia that lay on the fault line between Christianity and Islam, which has produced minarets in Sarajevo and Byzantine frescoes in Kossovo—not to mention villages such as the one I was on my way to visit. But what West found in Dubrovnik was a city more at home with Western tourists than with the shepherds that live up the hillsides in Montenegro, and she couldn't wait to leave.

I, on the other hand, did not mind lingering at all, despite the concentration of T-shirt stands. I swam in the chilly autumn waters of the Adriatic, took a coastal ferry to the delightful seaside colony of Cavtat, and walked the ramparts that surround the old town, which from overhead is a labyrinth painted by Giotto. I also spent a lot of time with the desk clerk, plotting how I would take the train to Belgrade. Why not fly, he kept asking? Just to catch the train meant a five-hour bus ride to Bar, near the Albanian border—and, he warned me, the rail coaches were filthy. But I persisted, remembering as a child the letters and magazine clippings that had come to my parents from Yugoslavia, telling of the line's progress through the mountains of Montenegro. When it was finished, it would connect Belgrade to the sea, and Yugoslavia to the modern world.

To get my wish meant a 4:45 A.M. wake-up call and riding a succession of rural buses over craggy mountain passes to Titograd, the capital of Montenegro, where I had hoped to intercept the train. Titograd, like so many cities in the fading Communist world, is a vast, drab housing project that leaves the impression that the landlord has fled with the rent money. Set in a valley that is surrounded by Alpine splendor are cinder-block high rises, dismal storefronts, and those cubist monuments that show a small group of workers, their fists aloft, celebrating, in this case, the paternal leadership of Marshal Tito, when, in reality, they should pay tribute to anyone who had to endure as one of his tenants.

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The train arrived shortly before 11:00 A.M., and for the next several hours it picked its way across the mountain gorges of Montenegro, which Rebecca West describes as "an astonishing country, even to those who know the bleakness of Switzerland and Scotland and the Rockies." As predicted by the desk clerk, I was jammed against a dirty window. Nevertheless, the compartment had the feel of the third ring at an opera, and the stage sets were snow-capped peaks and plunging valleys. I passed the day looking out the window, reading, searching the train vainly for food, and, as we left the mountains for the red-roofed villages and small paddocks of Serbia, thinking about my grandfather's life.

He was born Milivoy Stojan Stanoyevich at Koprivnica in February 1881, the second of four brothers. As a boy he tended sheep and went to school, first in the village and later in Zejacar, a town ten miles to the south on the Timok River, a tributary of the Danube. For reasons I was determined to learn, he escaped peasant life and enrolled at the university in Belgrade. Three years later he was back in Zejacar, teaching in the high school.

He might have lived happily as a rural educator had he not written a pamphlet entitled "Youth and Socialism," which enraged the Serbian monarchy. A villager who knew my grandfather once described the episode to me: "He wrote some articles against the king and he had to go away." The book was offensive so far as it advocated democracy and universal education, but he was sentenced to three years either in jail or exile. After much deliberation with his father, he left Serbia to study in Vienna and Geneva, and then he crossed to America, never to return. He was twenty-three years old.

In the late 1950s he added captions to a photo album that chronicled his life, and as the train, in Balkan fashion, crept between withered stations and stopped in remote fields without explanation, I flipped through the photocopy of the album that I had brought on my trip.

In 1911 he described himself as a "humble scholar and neophyte-explorer." Studying for a Ph.D., first at Berkeley and later at Columbia, he was trying "to get inside knowledge of Americanism, and American way of life." In 1917, he married my grandmother, who grew up on Fifth Avenue in New York and from whom I get the name Stevenson. Like Rebecca West, she was an educated, professional woman with strong literary tastes who fell in love with the romance of the Serbs—probably more than she did with my grandfather. But when their marriage was happy, they collaborated together on several books, including a translation of Yugoslav poetry that sings the praises of Dubrovnik.

In the twenties my grandfather published his thesis about Tolstoy, worked as an editor for the *New York Times*, and taught Slavonic languages

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at Columbia. But the autobiography-in-pictures is silent on the 1930s, and to hear my father tell the story, my grandfather was a casualty of the depression. He kept reading and writing, but left teaching to start a number of dubious business ventures, such as Universal Syndicate, whose envelopes floated through my childhood. Before his stroke, he became, in my father's phrase, "a world almanac lawyer," challenging local planning boards in New Jersey or trying to set himself up as a trust.

My sisters and I called him Otac, the Serbian word for *father*, and my only memories of him in good health are from holidays. He had a broad forehead and shoulders, closely cropped white hair, perfect diction but an immigrant's accent, and, to hear my mother speak of him, an ease in social situations that could produce either a dissertation on Herbert Spencer or sustained laughter. I have images of him in a professor's three-piece suit, although here my memory may be borrowing from the photographs. He loved giving us windup, novelty-store toys, such as music boxes or marching bears. In what I consider to be a touching expression of an immigrant's awkward affection for the culture, he once gave me a football, but inexplicably painted it red.

As the train snaked the last miles out of the parched Serbian landscape and into the dreary Belgrade outskirts, I knew that other immigrants had written better books, founded more successful businesses, or perhaps led happier lives. But what mattered was not the degree of my grandfather's successes or his material achievements but the sense that I carry, even two generations later, that the choices he made in his life are part of the same tableau in which my own life is being etched. Earl Shorris, a friend and a writer, once told me that he believed all immigration to be a form of revolution. In that sense, on this leg of the journey, I was searching for the points of rebellion.

Leaving the train at Central Station in Belgrade was like stepping into an airport-rack novel that features Balkan intrigue. The station was dim and smelled of burning coal. The platform was jammed with luggage held together with string and men wearing dark, ill-fitting raincoats, which suggested a convention of spies. Instead of meeting a contact, I was collected by a distant cousin, Stasha Stanojevich, technically the grandson of my grandfather's brother but someone I know as well as a brother. He grew up in Belgrade, works as a filmmaker in Paris, and often comes to visit my family in New York. In his early fifties, he has the kind of beard usually found on Russian poets and a ubiquitous twinkle in his smile and eyes. He greeted me warmly and said, without prompting, "This is the same station that your grandfather saw when he left. It's one hundred and six years old."

Even at rush hour, Belgrade has the feel of wartime Europe. The

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station was crowded and poorly lit, and the tram ran along forlorn streets where both the pedestrians and the shops give the impression that someone else has all the ration tickets. We were heading toward the apartment in central Belgrade where Stasha grew up and where his brother, Slobodan, now lives with his family. Even though I knew everyone well from meetings over the years, I could tell that my arrival prompted some uneasiness.

I was happy to spend the week sleeping on the sofa, but somehow the notion took hold that I would be much happier at a nearby four-star hotel, which would have not only isolated me from the city but probably bankrupted us all. Once it was agreed that a visiting American could sleep adequately on a sofa, we ate dinner in the kitchen. Children had been summoned for the occasion, and there was an exchange of family news. But mostly we talked about Yugoslavia's demise, as if it were a relative who had fallen on hard times.

As with all political dissolutions, the questions revolved around minority rights. Why, they asked, should Albanians in Kossovo be allowed to secede from Serbia while Serbs in Croatia, also a minority, were denied basic freedoms? They described the largely pro-Communist government in Belgrade as the remnants of a broken political machine, but took issue with the notion, advanced in the West, that the Croats and Slovenes stood for democracy and economic freedom while Serbs simply longed for face-lifted communism. Certainly in Belgrade the party organism was alive and well and did not mind sending tanks to protect its privileges. But, they asked, how did that compare with the heirs of Nazi collaborators who were near power in Croatia or the half million Serbs who were executed there when it was last independent? Over and over they argued with history, describing Yugoslavia—as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote about Russia—as a country isolated from its origins. How could there be consensus about the future if neither Serbs nor Croats had access to the past? It brought to mind Franz Kafka's prescience about the fate of central and eastern Europe when he wrote in *The Trial*: "'A melancholy conclusion,' said K. 'It turns lying into a universal principle.'"

Even though I will never master the rudiments of Yugoslav politics, I felt at home, nevertheless, not just on the sofa but in the many discussions that week about the Bulgarian question or why Romania has a death wish. Because my grandfather died without an estate, a large part of my inheritance was his political fatalism, especially about the Balkans. It was strangely familiar to give it free reign over coffee with Stasha or in the evening while watching television. The news was full of reports about Serbs circling their wagons in Croatia or Albanians plotting to gain control of Kossovo, and the sense of all conversations was that Yugoslavia

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at the center would not hold. At one point I asked Slobodan if the family was planning to spend the summer on the Adriatic coast, where they owned a house. "No," he said, in terms that implied the house had been lost in a storm. "We cannot. The house will be in Croatia." Or, as Stasha remarked one day when we were having Turkish coffee, "You know, it is a shooting country."

Koprivnica, which lies southeast of Belgrade near the border with Bulgaria, is a five-hour drive on twisting, two-lane roads that, in early autumn, traverse not simply rural Serbia but seemingly the contours of an impressionist painting. As Stasha and I drove south, mist filled the river valleys, and stacks of cornhusks, as if left by Claude Monet, awaited collection in the fields.

Although I had visited the village in 1976, Stasha had not been there since he was a child in the late 1940s. For language reasons, he was in charge of planning, and although he is a master tactician (in New York once he navigated the Franklin Avenue shuttle in the distant realms of Brooklyn) our itinerary to Koprivnica produced the most delightful schedule of confusion. On the first day, he arranged two luncheons, and during our trip he was always borrowing a telephone to tinker with the plans. What he was up against was Serbian hospitality, for which no timetable is a match. If we were going to visit one relative, we were going to see them all, and that meant making time for unscheduled meals, Turkish coffee, and the inevitable plum brandy, even if it was ten in the morning.

My grandfather was born in the twilight of the nineteenth century. Two of his brothers never left Koprivnica, except for the First World War, and it was their descendants, who live in the village or in surrounding towns, who awaited us now—their tables set, their crystal carefully arranged.

Lunch that first afternoon was in a high-rise apartment building in Zejacar that, like those in Titograd, suggested the visible hand of a slumlord. Broken glass littered the entrance, and the elevator did not work. But on the fourth floor was a small, well-kept apartment that was a wonderful example of the differences between state monopolies and private dreams. Above the sofa hung the obligatory tea towel of Marshal Tito. But more prominent in the room was the flickering pulse of Music Television, which gyrated throughout the meal.

To say we had lunch is to understate the occasion. It was one of those meals where you eat soup, meat, bread, and vegetables only to discover that the main course, a suckling pig, is on its way to the table. Because the master planner had neglected to brief me thoroughly, throughout the meal I was never quite sure with whom I was clinking wine glasses or pledging eternal friendship. But over coffee, a shoe box was produced

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with pictures taken of my parents in the 1950s. Maybe they had been sent with Christmas cards or passed through the generations. But in a tenement in Zejacar, seeing a photograph of my parents' wedding and a baby picture of my sister gave the luncheon the festiveness of a baptism.

Each of the four brothers that included my grandfather—Milan, Milivoy, Vidoi, and Milosh—had lives whose narratives are the outlines of short stories. Milan, who was the oldest and Stasha's grandfather, left Koprivnica to fight with the Serbian army against Austria. The war included a bitter retreat over the mountains of Montenegro, on the line that the train now follows. It is one of the defeats in Serbian history, like those in the Irish past, that has helped to forge a national identity.

Milan, however, was captured by the Austrians and spent three years in prison in Czechoslovakia. When he was released in 1918, he returned to Koprivnica and built a sawmill on a stream not far from his father's house. He also banished his wife and took in a Czech woman, possibly someone he met in the camps. According to Stasha, Milan was a sullen man. He let Stasha's father, at the age of eight, leave home to live with an uncle in Belgrade. After thirty years of living together, the Czech woman died, and Milan invited his first wife—Stasha's grandmother—to return to the mill. And, for reasons that could only be explained in the short story, she accepted.

At dusk we found the road to the mill, but reached there only by walking the last mile along a grooved cart track. An astonished family of Romanian peasants greeted us suspiciously but warmed to the story of Stasha's grandfather and showed us what survives of the mill, which is now used as a barn. We posed for pictures with the Romanians and walked back in darkness to the car. But I could tell that Stasha was angry. "You know," he said finally, "it's awful to have let the mill run down like that. Why don't they take care of it?" It was an offhand remark, and we dropped the subject quickly, but it offered a glimpse of the discontent in the Balkans as a succession of arguments about property rights.

The third son, Vidoi, inherited the family farm where my grandfather was born. Perhaps it was larger then, but today it is two houses—one of crumbling stone; the other built with rough-hewn brick—where Bosilka, the widow of Vidoi's son, still lives. Near the houses are several paddocks for pigs and chickens. Along the dirt road is an apple orchard and other houses of the village, which from a distance is a cluster of red-tile roofs nestled into otherwise lovely hillsides.

I had met Bosilka in 1976, so she greeted me not as a long-lost relative but as if I had lived my life on the farm and was now back after a semester at college. Her heavy wool stockings, print skirt, kerchief, and thick black-rimmed glasses gave the impression that she had stepped from the pages of a Chekhov novel. She showed us to our room and then

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cooked dinner in the outdoor kitchen that is unchanged from when my grandfather lived in the house.

After dinner, which was the familiar banquet from the farmyard and garden, and after other relatives had left, Stasha and I sat talking to Bosilka, who spoke of my grandfather as if it were only a few years ago, and not 1903, that he had left the village. She told the story of his exile, and how it was painful for his father, who was determined that at least one of his sons would be educated. To pay for his son's flight and continuing education he sold a wooded fifty-acre lot that had been intended to cushion his old age. Bosilka's telling of the story evoked Willa Cather's description of Mr. Shimerda: "He took a book out of his pocket, opened it, and showed me a page with two alphabets, one English and the other Bohemian. He placed this book in my grandmother's hands, looked at her entreatingly, and said, with an earnestness which I shall never forget, 'Te-e-ach, te-e-ach my An-tonia!' "

Although my grandfather never returned to Koprivnica, he never left the village either. Bosilka described how he sent money for the building of the church, and how letters and boxes of books arrived steadily over the years. One of his goals was to attract his other brothers to learning, but only with Milosh, who was the youngest, did he succeed.

Milosh followed Milivoy to Belgrade and later to Geneva, but decided against going to the United States and settled instead near Belgrade. He won a reputation as an educator and married a Serbian woman, Bosilka said, whom he had first known as a pen pal when she was growing up in Milwaukee. During the Second World War, when the Nazis were searching for Milosh, he came to Koprivnica to hide on the farm. He dressed as a peasant and spent his days in the fields. Seeing him, a neighbor asked: "Why are you looking for the sheep?" With a smile Bosilka said that he answered: "It's the sheep who are looking for me."

The heroes in Bosilka's stories were the schoolteachers of Zejacar, whose ranks my grandfather joined after university in Belgrade. Despite the long Turkish occupation of Serbia, they kept alive not only Serbian history and literature, but spoke of worlds beyond this poor corner of the Balkans. They were no doubt the inspiration that nurtured my grandfather on the road that led from Koprivnica to Palo Alto and Morningside Heights. In turn, no matter where he traveled or worked, the role in which he was most comfortable was that of a Zejacar teacher-at-large, whether he was promoting the idea of a democratic Yugoslavia or sending money so that one of his nephews could study in France.

During my trip and after, I spent considerable time collecting my grandfather's writings, which belong to the monograph school of literature. Some articles, such as "Czechoslovakia and Its People," read like

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chapters from a work by Hendrik van Loon. *Early Yugoslav Literature* is described in a *New York Times* book review as "erudite without being pedantic." *Russian Foreign Policy in the Near East* is full of speculation about how Moscow will secure its warm-water port. *Slavonic Nations of Yesterday and Today* makes the case for Pan-Slavism instead of fratricidal disputes or, more specifically, that Serbs and Croats should have "the feeling that they might all belong to a single Slavonic organism."

Even if the books are confined to a specific time and place, what I admire about the writing is that my grandfather could express himself so clearly and forcibly in English, which he obviously did not learn until his twenties. By then he knew Russian, German, French, and Czech. But he chose to write in English; and, although their works are not comparable, in reading my grandfather I am reminded of Joseph Conrad, another Slav of many languages who also wrote in English.

To my knowledge, my grandfather never wrote fiction, and *Tolstoy's Theory of Social Reform* does not have the narrative force of *Lord Jim*. But, as with Conrad, much of my grandfather's writing can be read as letters home. He understood the experience of exile and the literature of dislocation—both for himself and for Serbia—and although he shares some of Conrad's brooding detachment about a man's origins and his inevitable circumstances, he relieves the pessimism by applying the values of village life and the optimism of a new American to such melancholic themes as Yugoslavia's failure to embrace democracy.

What is also clear from his books is that he read widely, and in many languages. In the preface to one book he wrote: "To the Slav, therefore, the knowledge of languages is an immense stimulus to wide reading, and the necessity of reading is an equally potent motive for the acquisition of languages."

Given his love for the printed word, I would delight now to hear his opinion of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. At its worst, it is the world's longest Fodor's guide and leaves no chapel unvisited or gravestone unturned. But where the writing is sharpest, Rebecca West succeeds in her goal of preserving a civilization, in a sealed chamber of printed words, that she fears will be swept away, not just in the modern world but at the hands of the Nazis then occupying the country.

I am sure my grandfather would have quibbled with Rebecca West's understanding of Serbian history. How could a Serb completely accept an Englishwoman's interpretation? But I believe he would have appreciated her passionate denunciations of imperialism, be it Turkish, Hapsburg, or German. Both my grandfather and Rebecca West saw Yugoslavia as Alexis de Tocqueville saw America: as a society that to succeed at the national level needed to incorporate the values of the villages. "In America," Tocqueville wrote, "it may be said that the

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township was organized before the county, the county before the state, the state before the union." The same is true in Yugoslavia, but, as both my grandfather and Rebecca West understood, the country too often has been in the hands of outsiders—be they pashas from Turkey or gauleitees from Karl Marx—who had no time for the villages.

In Koprivnica the following day, Stasha and I were free to roam about, even though with our cameras and Western clothes we looked like graffiti on a Russian landscape painting. It was harvest time. The school was closed, and the main street was clogged with ox carts and heavily laden wagons. Men balanced themselves on the stacks of cornhusks while women, identical in appearance to Bosilka, drove the teams. We took pictures of the farmhouse where our grandfathers were born, and then tried to get in touch with a professor, and also a friend, who has done extensive research on both my grandfather and the liberal educational system that thrived in this corner of Serbia.

I'm afraid we disappointed Milan Milosevich by not planning to spend several days at his home in Nish, a hundred miles south. I had visited his family in 1976, and in the early eighties he had come to see our family in America as part of his research. But we had run out of visiting time and were reconciled to miss him when Stasha learned, through one of his phone calls, that Milan was on his way to Koprivnica to attend an aunt's funeral.

We tried to meet Milan at the railroad station, a forlorn building beside a line of single track, but missed him and decided to wait outside the house where the family was holding the wake. A picture of the woman, her name and dates, had been posted around town, and now the villagers were arriving to pay their respects. The scene was a passage from *War and Peace*. The men wore coarse black suits, oddly knotted neckties, and shoes retrieved from the deep recesses of their closets. The women clasped bouquets of flowers hastily snatched from their gardens. About a hundred people gathered at the house, and they huddled on long benches in the garden, evoking a line from King Lear, "The weight of this sad time we must obey," that my grandfather quotes in his book that pays tribute to Tolstoy.

As the mourners began their procession to the church, which inside has an inscription of thanks to my grandfather, we also left for the cemetery. Where we were going was outside the village, to a secluded hillside. Without Bosilka we would not have found the graveyard, which was originally hidden from the Turkish garrison to insure that at least the land of the dead would be free from occupation. And without Bosilka we would not have found my grandfather's gravesite.

As at the mill, we had to abandon the car and walk for a mile along a cart trail. All the while I kept looking for familiar landmarks, something

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to remind me that I had walked this road before. Only when I saw the headstones in the overgrown weeds did I know that I was in the same place I had visited in the summer of 1976, when I buried my grandfather.

He actually died in February 1973. During the last thirteen years of his life, he had nothing for which to live, save perhaps to show whoever was watching that giving up was not in his nature. He was a crumpled figure who, on Sundays, was rolled into a waiting room by an orderly in a loose-fitting olive uniform. What sustained him was not life-support systems but the sense that death, like some occupier of Serbia or a poorly worded sentence, was worth fighting. I can now remember that his eyes had an unusual combination of gentleness and don't-get-in-my-way determination, or, as Erich Remarque wrote of another survivor on another battlefield clinging to life, "He possessed something that made his eyes move and that was called soul."

After he died, his remains were cremated. The family had a service in an Orthodox church, but we had no thoughts on what to do with the ashes. Three years passed with them stored in a closet.

In the summer after I graduated from college, when I was eager to travel in Eastern Europe, it was decided that I would bury his ashes in Koprivnica. When I arrived in the village that first time, I explained to various relatives that I was carrying my grandfather's ashes and wanted to bury them in the cemetery. There were looks of horror on the faces of my hosts, and dictionaries were consulted to find the correct translation for questions about my fear of "evil spirits." But Bosilka's husband, Stojan (now dead) arranged for the burial, and one hot July morning, we walked the dirt road to the graveyard with two oxen, shovels, candles, and plum brandy—presumably to counter one set of spirits with another.

Stojan cleared the thickets from the family plot, and I dug a hole near where my grandfather's parents were buried. After we covered the ashes, Stojan lit candles, as Bosilka did this time, and, at a loss for a proper burial service, I repeated the Lord's prayer, which in a remote corner of Serbia seemed stretched to its territorial limits.

When my father visited the village in 1980, he arranged for a headstone to be cut, and we found it today. It gave my grandfather's name and dates of life, stated that he had been born in Koprivnica and died in New York, and then listed the names of his three grandchildren, including my own. On this remote Serbian hillside I had not expected to find my name, in Cyrillic letters, etched into stone. But it is a link to the village, and my grandfather, that, to use one of Lincoln's constructions about hallowed grounds, I find "altogether fitting." As Stasha, Bosilka, and I walked back to the car along the dirt path, I felt the same as when I visit Gettysburg and try to equate the tranquility of the farmland and the inspiration of the monuments with the courage that is required for a new birth of freedom.

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Educating Performers

JAMES SLOAN ALLEN

LIKE MOST MIDDLE-CLASS AMERICAN PARENTS, I wanted my children to study the arts, possibly to become proficient. I intoned all the shibboleths of general arts education—the arts broaden the mind, refine the sensibilities, enrich the self, fulfill our humanity, and so forth. I endorsed public funding for the arts, both within education and without. And I took satisfaction in seeing my children exhibit and enjoy artistic aptitudes. Then the unexpected happened. Midway through high school, my youngest daughter declared her intention to become a classical musician. I was taken aback. I equivocated. I philosophized with her about how it is one thing to enjoy the arts as an avocation or for aesthetic appreciation but quite another to pursue the arts as a profession. The very rewards that entice us into art, I explained, may elude professional artists; for art can ask too much of them and return too little, consuming rather than sustaining their energies and resources, curtailing rather than widening the compass of their abilities, frustrating rather than satisfying their ambitions, and ultimately diminishing rather than enhancing their lives.

These were not my words exactly, but the gist. Not, to be sure, what my daughter expected to hear. Many are the parents who have laid similar misgivings before their artistically inclined children—as many are the thinkers who have probed the paradox that art can do more harm than good. But I faced a special predicament in making the case with my daughter. I also happened to be an administrator and teacher engaged in the professional education of artists at the Juilliard School. How could I discourage my own child from trying to become a professional artist while I was facilitating the designs of other young people to do just that? To my daughter's critical eye, this betrayed contradiction, if not duplicity.

My purpose was not, of course, to discourage her. It was to alert her to the difficulties ahead, should she follow her avowed course. She needed to acknowledge, for instance, how elusive careers in the arts, especially the fine arts, can be. Of the tens of thousands of conservatory

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and university art-school graduates who enter the marketplace each year, I pointed out, only a tiny fraction immediately secure full-time artistic employment or professional management, promising engagements, or profitable contracts. Most of them take on other work while awaiting their Big Chance, which might never come. Some carve out complementary careers in teaching, administration, management, journalism, and so on, resigned to being artists part-time. Others go underemployed indefinitely and resent it (the numbers remain uncertain because many artists lead gypsy lives, and many never cease identifying themselves as artists, even if they hold "day jobs"—"I'm a singer," says the waiter, "I just do this between engagements"). Then there are those who partake of transitory or unsatisfying successes. They embark on the fabled career only to watch it trail off in the vagaries of the profession and the public's hunger for fresh celebrity. Or they find their satisfactions simply wearing thin, as they tire of incessant travel or the ravages of commercialism and competitiveness, or as they sense their artistry desiccating from dependence on the public's tastes.

Mundane actualities such as these, bespeaking unrealized or misguided ambitions, should give pause to any aspiring artist. My daughter paused, but not for long. What else? she asked. I went on to describe what I characterized as the moral risks of the arts as a profession. Artists incur moral risks, I told her, when they allow the professional expectations and personal satisfactions of art to become supreme standards of value. This is how aesthetics devours ethics, setting art above everything else, severing artists from the common life and speciously justifying worldly irresponsibility, uncivil behavior, and impervious self-absorption. Don't let this happen to you, I warned, for this is the subtlest seduction through which art leads to bad ends. Art lovers can also be seduced, as philosophers have always known. But professional artists, who live under the summons to artistic perfection, are most susceptible—and as Thomas Mann, for whom the moral risks of art were a favorite subject, ruefully wrote of artists in *Tonio Kröger*: "What is more pitiable than a life led astray by art?"

All of this painted a rather bleak picture of my daughter's future, professional and human. But, as she quickly perceived, it was also incomplete. It left out all the light. She believed, as did I, that despite the probable hardships and misdirections on the path of an artistic career, there are no lives more enviable or admirable than those guided by the disciplined purposefulness, the inspiriting delights, and the humanistic benefactions of art. No parental caveats about art as a profession should eclipse these life-giving possibilities. Inspired by them and braced by the triumphs of professionalism in elevating the quality of performance and in multiplying opportunities for artists to

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thrive on art, my daughter reaffirmed her desire to become a classical musician. She would take the risks, both mundane and moral. She entered Juilliard this past year, with my blessing. Now she is learning in earnest what it means to make art work for artists rather than against them.

Making art work for artists not only as adept professionals but as versatile human beings has not long been the avowed mission of American conservatories. Take music conservatories as the model. Born to train American musicians on this side of the Atlantic and to foster an American classical musical culture (as Woodrow Wilson proclaimed at the founding in 1905 of what became the Juilliard School), American music conservatories, like their European forebears, originally chose to concentrate exclusively on artistic training. Education was left to other institutions. This made the conservatory something of a hybrid—part professional school, like those for law and medicine, part vocational school, like those for technological training (reflected in the early organization of Juilliard, pairing the Juilliard Graduate School with the undergraduate Institute of Musical Art). The mixed identity has bred some tensions over the educational role of all professional art schools, as democracy has brought mounting numbers and many types of students to institutions of higher learning, including conservatories, and as the arts professions have proliferated and grown increasingly complicated. Yet one uncertainty is dissolving: training in the arts is, by itself, no longer enough. The arts professions—uncompromising, complex, and unpredictable as they are—expect more, and adult life in late twentieth-century America demands it. Conservatory students deserve to be educated, not just trained, whether they are to have careers in the arts or not.

Juilliard, reputedly among the most traditional and aloof of conservatories, coddling geniuses and dismissing the rest of humankind (notwithstanding the presidencies of such intellectually vigorous and cosmopolitan figures as John Erskine and William Schuman), unequivocally embraced that expansive educational mission half a dozen years ago upon the accession of a young president, Joseph W. Polisi, deeply imbued with it and committed to orienting conservatory education around the position of art and artists in the "real world." But educating artists is not easy, however keen the philosophical convictions, owing perhaps to artists' strengths more than to their weaknesses. To educate artists, you have to make the most of those strengths; and to do this you have to understand who artists are.

This understanding begins with discrimination between the two orders of artists—creators and performers. Creators, or "creative artists,"

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are the writers, painters, sculptors, composers, choreographers, and others who freely invent artworks. They, not performers, have inspired most theories of art, artists, and creativity; for they have license to see the previously unseeable, hear the hitherto unhearable, imagine the heretofore unimaginable, and they have the magical talent to lend these artistic form. There is much to be learned from creators, but there is not much to teach them, save "background" knowledge and a certain facility of execution (no mean task).

Performers, or "recreative artists" as they sometimes label themselves, share with creative artists the gift of an unteachable talent for artistic expression, and like all artists, they are afflicted with ambivalence over displaying that talent in public, relishing acclaim, apprehensive of rejection. Yet creative artists retain the prerogative of privacy (they may be nowhere in evidence when their artworks appear). Performing artists, on the other hand, live constantly under the critical eyes of teachers, critics, audiences, and peers, who tend to equate performers with performance—"How can we know the dancer from the dance?" Yeats asked. My daughter remarks, with a hint of pique, "Other performers don't really accept you until they hear you play." Then there is the adage never far from the performer's mind: "You are only as good as your last performance."

Putting their very selves on display expressly for the purpose of approbation distends the emotional wires and flails the emotional nerve ends of performers, creating a psychological fragility in some, an indomitable vanity in others, or both. The "artistic temperament" of performers thus issues less from depths of feeling, which may also be present, than from the exigent vulnerabilities besetting them in performance, where they are judged entirely by how well they execute an artistic action and where they are expected, repeatedly, to verify in public how good they are. Mirroring these exigencies, music students have adapted the popular line, "Have a nice day" to their own absorbing concerns, bidding their companions adieu with, "Have a good lesson."

This line underscores a primary difference between performers and creators. Whatever their innate talent, most performers, unlike creators, depend equally on teachable skills. It was to perfect those skills according to ascending professional standards that performing arts schools came into existence. They were called forth in the last century and a half or so by unprecedentedly challenging artworks and by the phenomena of the critic and the ticket-buying audience, both of whom were bound to be impatient with amateurism. While those standards and institutions were shaping the performing arts professions as we know them, they were also distancing performers from creators—think of the distance between performers and creators since Shakespeare's day, or Bach's, or Beethoven's.

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That distance is marked above all by the physical dexterity and discipline required of performers. Performing artists must make the fingers move with flawless precision, the voice perfectly hit the note, the body move fluidly, the limbs fly, breathing come at will, tear ducts submit to command. And their polished accomplishments can be astonishing: the pianist whose hands race across the keyboard capturing every harmonic nuance and never missing a note; the dancer who spins blindingly *en pointe*, then soars as if suspended in air to land on a dime; the actor who dissolves the stage and enfolds the audience in a drama of verisimilitude; the singer who holds F above high C until the house comes down. So demanding are the physical expectations of performance as to remove performers from the guild of artists and send them into the ranks of athletes.

Like athletes, performing artists are endowed with extraordinary physical capabilities, and they exhibit physical feats that turn audiences into fans and themselves into celebrities, just as exceptional athletes earn the honorific of "artist"—both also now have medical specialists to treat their distinctive and accumulating physical ailments and injuries. The very vocabulary of athletics applies to performers: for example, performing artists and athletes "play" at their work; they are "trained" through "exercise," "drill," and "practice"; they "compete" before judges or audiences; and they have "coaches," whose "coachings" prepare them for the game, or the performance.

It should not be overlooked that athletic and performing arts coaches (and teachers) have the further affinity of frequently becoming mentors of surpassing influence over their "players." Mentors in music, utilizing the privilege of tutorial pedagogy, can almost mold a pupil's every move and thought, determining not just what to perform and how and when to perform it, but how to conduct a career and a life. The efficacy of mentors in nurturing individuals' talents and self-confidence is to be prized. But performing arts mentors can also at times exert too much control, behaving as exclusive ushers into the profession and rendering their pupils excessively dependent on them, inhibiting rather than stimulating growth and nourishing insecurity, self-absorption, and a hunger for exclusive attentions. Thus, some musicians balk, for example, at discussion classes, resistant to sharing a teacher: "Why can't I come to your office instead of class to talk about the book with you alone?" they ask. The mentor's authority therefore warrants balancing. Discussion classes provide a portion of this balance. Another part comes with an additional ingredient of the performer's training and profession common to athletics: "teamwork." However intensely performers study individually, they usually consummate their artistry collectively, in ensembles—the true solo is a rarity. The performance ensemble is like an athletic team. Its

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members are interdependent; they must play together to win, be the end victory or applause or the intrinsic pleasures of playing.

A final bond between performers and athletes is forged by "competition." Winning competitions is the raison d'être of athletics. But competitions are also pivotal to the careers of most solo musicians; and every audition in the performing arts is also a competition: performers "try out" for a part or an orchestral chair much as athletes do for a team. The spirit of athletic competition also envelops the performer's relation to the works performed. A performance is a test of capacities between what the creator has created and what the performer can perform. Performers often describe themselves in the argot of athletic competition, recounting how they "wrestled" with a script or a score, "stretched to make it," decided to "go for it," "attacked" a passage, "conquered" a move or a piece, "nailed" a note or a concerto, played like a "macho violinist," or "won" applause. This is a respectful competition (unlike that among many performers), but a competition nevertheless. And not infrequently performers win it by default, refusing to perform works that return too little satisfaction for the effort, a defeat that has befallen much twentieth-century classical music.

The competition between performers and creators betokens another cause of the breach between them, which leads from athletics back to art. Not only do performers possess physical skills uncommon to creators, they also rely on a mental capacity that creators hardly use. This is active memory.

Active memory once dominated schooling, and, as such scholars as Frances Yates and Mary Carruthers have shown, mnemonics once pervaded Western culture. This is no longer so. Nowadays, memory plays a peripheral role in schooling—chiefly in the study of foreign languages. Socrates anticipated the decline with his prediction in the *Phaedrus* that memory would atrophy and thought itself would falter once the written word gained sway. In recent times, both active memory and the written word have lost ground to educational principles exalting originality and individuality while discounting mental exertion, and to computers whose "memories" are faster and more reliable than those of humans. Memorizing has become degraded in schools. But not for performers. Performing artists probably depend on active memory more than anyone else today. Who but a performer has to memorize anything like the score of a symphony or a concerto, the choreography of a ballet, or the role of Hamlet?

Creative artists have been under an obligation in Western culture since at least the late eighteenth century to create "original" artworks. Performers have been under a kindred obligation to commit that origi-

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nality to memory, completely or partially, and with ever greater expectations of fidelity (the freedom of improvisation has waned, though improvisation and originality hold higher esteem in some of the performing arts than in others). Although a performer can stamp a work with an individual performance style and surprise a creator with performing insights, the work is almost always there, waiting to be learned and performed. Even improvised performances unfold within set formulas.

Unlike sheer rote remembering or re-enacting a routine task, the performer's memorizing entails studiously fixing a sequence of symbols and signals—notes, words, movements—in the memory systems of the mind and the body so that actions will flow unconsciously (among dancers and singers, the "physical memory" guides performance as much as mental memory, through actions that physically feel right). This is why performers practice and rehearse so much. Practicing and rehearsing carry the symbols and signals from the conscious to the unconscious memory. Navigating this course effectively calls for more than mindless repetition; it often exacts arduous concentration bent on comprehending the work, its aesthetic structure, style, and logic, its emotional content and intent. This concentration may be more intuitive than intellectual, and the intuitive or cognitive patterns of performers tend to match their art forms—musicians responding most alertly to sounds, dancers to visual configurations, actors to emotional images (predispositions that ill-suit many performers to conventional classroom instruction). Yet rare is the intuitively self-taught performer. Professional performance requires too much careful practice. And this is where good performance teachers come in. They make practice pay off as an analytical exertion of mind and memory that constitutes nothing less than learning how to learn.

Performers refer to creations so learned as something they carry with them from performance to performance, rather like baggage—"in my pocket," as some say, or, for example, "We brought Brahms's Fourth Symphony from Boston," "I'm taking Iago to Los Angeles." Like baggage that can be lost or left behind, a "part" or a "piece" remains with a performer only as long as it is in the performer's possession—in memory.

The imperatives of memory stay with the professional performer always: prescribing the learning of every work; informing the scrutiny of its structure; directing the search for mnemonic guideposts (more difficult to find, by the way, in modernist music, dance, and drama than in those of more conventional form); haunting the nightmares of every performer who worries about forgetting, as all do; and disabling those afflicted by that acute disorder, stage fright, which is, in part, the pathological fear of a deep memory loss during performance (a malady

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whose grip can strangle the most established careers, as it nearly did that of Sir Laurence Olivier). These imperatives of memory also link today's performing artists with their earliest predecessors, the poets and storytellers of the oral tradition whose memories were the sole carriers of the literary culture. These imperatives also introduce other differences between creative and performing artists that are germane to the education of performers and to general education at large.

Impelled by the imperatives of originality rather than memory, creative artists are curious about the big aesthetic questions, as are the philosophers whose speculations they have long aroused: What is art? Whence does it come? What does, or should, it do? Stirred by this curiosity, many creative artists have penned theories and manifestos expounding upon the metaphysics, psychology, and aesthetics of creativity. Most performers do not take these intellectual flights, any more than athletes do. Intellectually modest and generally reticent (barring actors, singers, and conductors, whose vocations elicit loquacity), performing artists tend to be indifferent to abstract ideas (and, not uncommonly in the classical arts, to aesthetic innovations as well). For just as performers depend more on physical skills and memory than on imagination, they are attracted more to action than to thought.

It is a commonplace that learning how *to do* something in action is not the same as learning *about* something in fact or theory. Publishers have exploited this commonplace in recent years by filling bookstore shelves with "How-To" books on every subject, subsuming traditional categories or relegating them to darkened corners. The natural sciences formally draw the distinction as that between theoretical and experimental scientists: theorists speculate about nature; experimentalists test the theorists' speculations empirically. As theorists are to creative artists, free to imagine, to discover, to invent, so experimentalists are to performers: both "perform" actions, artistically or experimentally. For that matter, experimentalists may perform "artistically," and performers frequently "experiment." Removed one step from all of these, incidentally, are the critics and scholars who know much about the arts and sciences but neither create nor perform as artists or scientists. They tend to view artists, particularly performers, as vessels, and artists typically view them as irrelevant—hence the reciprocal condescension of, for example, musicologists and musicians on many college campuses.

It is easy to fault performing artists for becoming too preoccupied with the "how-to-do" of practical training. They can fixate on "how to" perform the works, or parts of works, in their repertoire, blind to everything beyond moving their fingers or speaking their lines or passing across the stage. This blinkered vision will likely compromise

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them as artists no less than as human beings. But there is no denying that preternaturally gifted performers can perform at least selected works very well indeed without knowing much more than how to do so, as child prodigies prove ("What goes through your mind when you play?" I once asked a celebrated thirteen-year-old soloist. "Nothing," she said). And for this they have been idealized since Mozart first picked up his violin. These gifts, more conspicuous in music than in the other performing arts, are among the deepest mysteries of art. They are also among the toughest obstacles to educating performers, since education seems superfluous to genius—although, as Robert Musil remarked of championship race horses in *A Man Without Qualities*, genius likely misnames the ability to perform.

Still, the image of the conservatory student as a stunted creature akin to an idiot savant is more stereotype than fact. Most of these young people differ from their liberal arts college contemporaries only in the degree of their artistic talent, the strength of their self-discipline, and the clarity of their professional concentration—as well as in the abundant hours they daily spend in the practice room or the rehearsal hall. ("Everyone at Juilliard is so well-adjusted!" my daughter exclaims, then quizzically observes how they will break off a romance that conflicts with their practicing.) Many performers are astounding in their capaciousness: artistically gifted, intellectually astute, social spirited, boundlessly energetic, infectious in their passion for performing, they excel in every arena they enter. Yet whether a performer is capaciously endowed with abilities or not, to educate no less than to train them, it is necessary to heed the gyroscope of their existence, which is learning "how-to-do" things, or practical-mindedness.

Because performers want to *do* things, not just to think about them, they ask of every instruction, every book, every idea, "What is the use of that?" Good teachers since Confucius and Socrates have known that this query can reduce education to stupefying practical training, tepid bromides, or cheap "relevance." They also know that the vice of vocationalism is the same in any profession, including their own: a narrowing of perspective that shrinks the professional as well as the human horizons of practitioner and profession alike. These teachers further know that the virtue of vocationalism does the opposite. It instills a potency of practical-mindedness that transcends any profession. Rousseau pithily spelled out this virtue in *Emile*: "It matters little to me whether my pupil is intended for the army, the church, or the law [he might have included the arts and academe]: Life is the trade I would teach him."

At Juilliard, several educational strategies aim to set the virtue of vocationalism against its vice. These do not always avail. But through

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them runs a single principle: practical-mindedness means learning how to learn, not just learning the work at hand. In keeping with this principle, performing arts teachers and their colleagues (e.g., those in "ear training" and "literature and materials of music") facilitate interactions among the various parts of a performance, ranging from mind and memory to physical movement. "Bow the strings hard, not gently, here," Leonard Bernstein instructed members of the Juilliard orchestra during a reading of Mahler's Seventh Symphony. "These measures are not supposed to be pretty; this is the music of a nightmare; you should sweat when you play it, and shiver when you hear it." Mastering these interactions, or just managing them well, enables performers to learn new works with assurance and to perform them with the seeming ease that Castiglione extolled in the *Book of the Courtier* as *sprezzatura*, or the "art of concealing art." Attaining this mastery exceeds mere training and technical facility. It comes close to fulfilling the mandate of the artist framed by Henry James in "The Art of Fiction" (although he had creators not performers in mind): "Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost," because "the province of art is all of life, all feeling, all observation, all vision."

James's mandate and the principle of practical-mindedness bear the heaviest pedagogical burden outside of performance studies in the liberal arts. At liberal arts colleges, teachers may rely on scholarly expertise, erudition, and the sanction of grades to motivate students, investing minimal effort in pedagogy (to the detriment of many a class). In conservatories, liberal arts teachers soon learn that pedagogy is, if not everything, then close to it. Expertise and erudition fall on deaf ears as musicians furtively practice fingerings, dancers stretch their legs, actors mouth their lines, and all contrive excuses to be absent, scoffing at grades. Given a choice, most performing arts students would shun liberal arts classes altogether; and many of them candidly, not to say aggressively, argue that if they had wanted to study the liberal arts they would have gone to college along with all those drifters and malingerers who lack professional purpose. Liberal arts classes have to be pedagogically calculated and unacademic in aim, while intellectually substantive, to win these students' attention, much less their interest.

To shoulder these burdens, liberal arts teachers at Juilliard collaborate, formulating interpretations of the classic works they teach in the core humanities classes, sharing pedagogical techniques, and regularly conducting classes together. Some teachers have become ingenious at, for instance, relating a topic to the performer's vocation—demonstrating how writing a clear English paragraph, say, or discerning signs of character in a novel, tracing the arc of its plot through crescendos to

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climax, denouement, and perhaps to a coda, and detecting order within the disorder of its literary form can sharpen a performer's perceptions of art generally and beget interpretive options for performance. Students respond by their individual artistic lights. "Reading Virginia Woolf showed me strange conflicts between emotions that I can use on the stage," states an actor. "*Madame Bovary* taught me the difference between a sentimental performance and an honest one," grants a pianist. "Writing and re-writing has helped me see how a musical score is put together," says a violinist. And a percussionist remarks of a grammatical insight: "A colon works like a drum-roll: it prepares you for the cymbals' clash; a semi-colon is more like a modulation."

More substantive than applications of the liberal arts to performance, though, are those that go the other way, from art to life: articulating a response to an artwork or a book is analogous to making sense of anything. What happens, Juilliard students may be asked, when you listen to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or see *Swan Lake* or watch *Othello* or read Goethe's *Faust*? Are you elated or puzzled, enlightened or troubled? Never mind what your response should be; take a close look at what it is. It holds clues to both you and the work. What were the expectations you brought to it, the emotions it aroused, the dissatisfactions it provoked, the pleasures it supplied? And how exactly did it achieve its effects? Whether performers articulate answers or not, to grapple with the questions is to begin crossing the bridge of criticism, linking subjectivity and objectivity, feeling and thought, reaction and form, self and incident—a passage that teaches them to be critical observers and thoughtful interpreters not of art alone but of everything. To borrow Nietzsche's words from one of the books Juilliard students read, *On Genealogy of Morals*: "'What really was that which we have just experienced?' and moreover 'Who are we really?'" Learning to interpret experience intelligently, alert to the wiles of bias and the seductions of self-interest, is the essence of a liberal education. Performers will only add, "What is the use of that?"

Uses of a liberal education are not hard to come by when interpretation is shown to serve action. It serves action in performance all the time. It serves action in life when practical-mindedness translates the emotions and ideas provoked by art or anything else into experiential insights and willed behavior. Astutely taught, both intellectual and anti-intellectual performers are able to complete this translation. And unlikely as it might seem, nothing better facilitates their doing this than reading and talking about classic books: a dancer, demoralized by a friend's duplicity, finds the cause and cure of her malaise in Dante's image of treachery as the undoing of the trust essential to self-confidence and social relations; a shy midwestern violinist beleaguered by unruly

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roommates takes courage from Nietzsche to transform his resentment into an ultimatum that they get out (they submit, granting him respect, and he becomes a new man); a cellist having lived within music since childhood is jarred from his insularity by Tolstoy's scolding accusation that if art exists only for artists it benefits neither them nor anyone else, and instead wreaks unpardonable damage; an actor dejected by his parents' disregard gains resilience from Freud's explication of the psychologies of pleasure and pain; a musician intimidated by academic pretentiousness, jargon, and Ivy League associates obtains intellectual confidence from George Orwell on the ideological implications of language; and my daughter awakens to the guile of an actor's romantic overtures by studying Castiglione on *sprezzatura*.

For virtually every classic reading (Western and non-Western, I might add) in Juilliard's six-year-old humanities curriculum, there is a student who puts it to experiential use. Trivial uses? Perhaps. Limited historical perspective? Yes, deliberately; historical perspective comes later, in elective courses. But the particular uses to which students put their readings are not the aim and measure of teaching. That aim and measure reside in getting these unapologetically vocationally minded students to read, discuss, and comprehend challenging books in reference to lived experience. These are not trivial ends of education. They are elemental and generic. They are what Rousseau meant by learning the "trade" of life.

Elemental and generic as learning that trade may be, it has compelling utility to performers as it bears on the uses of art itself. These uses are everywhere evident at Juilliard, in classrooms and conversations as well as in performances. Contrary to myth, there is no excuse for a life to be led astray by art here.

It is true that most young performers take up their art primarily for the emotional pleasures of its beauties and for the psychological gratifications of applause. And no wonder. No other profession offers quite this heady blend of satisfactions—assuredly, none so thrives on ceremonial public acclaim. But the forces attracting performers to private pleasure and public adulation are at least partially offset by opposing forces. These arise from the performing arts as the most social of artforms.

Their insistent sociability—performers usually perform together, and virtually all performances involve audiences—imparts to the performing arts an inherent quotient of social significance and responsibility. Because young performers do not instinctively recognize these social functions of art in their preoccupation with pleasure and professional interests, they are obligated at Juilliard to start thinking about them. Classes immerse students in the literary and intellectual tradition that

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has assessed the power of art and scrutinized the profits and perils that art holds for both artists and audiences. Students have to weigh that power and decide how it should be used. If they conclude that art exists solely for their pleasure or for its own sake, then they must justify dedicating their lives to it and expecting others to support them. Outside the classroom, students are encouraged to test and to expand their conceptions of art by, among other things, serving as mentors to younger students and performing for audiences that have something special to gain, such as those in rural communities, schools, hospitals, and nursing homes, because these audiences, moved by more than aesthetic appreciation, have something special to teach performers about the social responsibilities of art.

These responsibilities have to do with what I would describe, hazarding the inevitable clichés, as the good that art bestows by educating the senses, the emotions, and the imagination, extending their reach and magnifying their ability to open unique and vital sources of meaning in life. All art contributes to this education. But the performing arts do it actively, socially, irresistibly. And therein lies as clear an ultimate end of educating performers as we are likely to hit upon: preparing performers to be educators of the senses, the emotions, and the imagination and to secure and share the rewards of art without suffering the losses to which a life in performance can subject them.

I commend my daughter's ambition to become one of these performer/educators. More challenging now than ever, it is an ambition carrying risks to match every happy prospect. It is not, to be sure, an ambition for everybody, not even for all who wish to pursue it. But whether my daughter and her fellows succeed professionally or not matters less than that they are properly prepared to try, and that whatever other bounty this preparation yields, it enables them to prove enduringly to themselves and to others the sublime power of art to do good. More than this, no aspiring artist, or parent, should feel the need to ask.

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Overflying Russia

ELISAVIETTA RITCHIE

The green edge of Estonia
sickles a line against Baltic waves,
lapis, almost warm this July.

Below, in the winter dusk of 1912,
my father Yuri, his brother Ivan,
one year apart but close as twins,

two little boys in reindeer boots,
chopped a hole through the ice,
cast their lines in.

Ivan sensed a fish on his hook,
leaned over, slipped into the current.
Yuri plunged under the roof of ice,

thrashed and groped, finally touched
his brother, somehow hauled him up,
dragged him like a seal to shore . . .

* * *

After the Revolution the boys
hid their noble birth,
loaded barges along the Neva.

Then, their mother and sister starving,
their father jailed in Lyubyanka,
they had to join the Red Army.

On guard at a beet sugar mill near Tula,
they got the commissar drunk on vodka,
forged papers for refugees to escape.

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The boys slipped off to find the White Army
but ended up in different units, planned
to catch up with each other later.

In battle Yuri, shot through the leg,
was dragged by sled to a monastery.
In his fevered dream, he heard Ivan say:

"I died, but you will survive,
you will go to a land
where English is spoken . . ."

Yuri caught the last American ship
from Sevastopol. Years later at last
he read in an émigré journal

"The Fate of a Hero":
Ivan was killed near Kharkov
while leading an infantry charge.

In retelling that dream, Yuri predicted
his brother would reappear
just before his own death.

* * *

In Virginia, tied to a wheelchair
at 84, my father Yuri tugged
his afghan with icicle fingers.

The air conditioner was locked on HIGH
and old bones are slow to thaw. Yet
from boyhood he shivered, even in summer.

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He grew confused, barely whispered.
Then one morning his voice was soldier strong:
"Last night my brother Ivan returned."

My father was buried at Arlington.
Full honors: six horses, rifle salutes,
the caisson with that sad handful of ash.

* * *

Where did anyone, in the haste of war,
dig Uncle Ivan a grave . . . Overflying Russia,
I watch field after field unfold below.

✪ ELISAVIETTA RITCHIE's books include *Flying Time: Stories and Half-Stories*, *Tightening the Circle Over Eel Country*, and *Raking the Snow*.

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Murder and the Utopian Moment

MICHAEL ANDRÉ BERNSTEIN

Death is psychosomatic.
—Charles Manson

In July of 1979, on my way to see my family in Toronto, I stopped for a few days in New York. On one of those evenings, at a friend's apartment, I wanted to know who was playing in some of the clubs I used to visit when I still lived on the East Coast. My friend passed me a copy of that week's *Village Voice*, and I can still remember idly flipping through it before turning back for a moment to glance at the cover. Then I felt the room turn suddenly quiet, and something that must have been nausea but seemed utterly unfamiliar constricted my world to a kind of dispersed aching. The headline read: "Blinded By the Light: The Einhorn–Maddux Murder Case." The beginning of the article was framed on the left by a photo of a heavyset, bearded man named Ira Einhorn, with the caption: "Philadelphia's favorite hippie son, sought cosmic consciousness and ingenuous child women he could mold," and on the right by a picture of a young woman, Holly Maddux, who was described as "shy and self-doubting, sought a guru. She found him in Einhorn, who today stands charged with her murder." Although I could not recognize her from the harsh, overexposed newspaper image—a detail that in itself disturbed me—I immediately realized that the victim was the same woman I had known a decade earlier when she was a student at Bryn Mawr College. Even though we had several friends in common, Holly and I were never especially close and had lost touch altogether after she temporarily withdrew from university. So it was not the news of her death alone that shocked me, nor even learning about it so accidentally and publicly. It was the story of her being bludgeoned to

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death and hidden in a steamer trunk for almost eighteen months, the brute fact of the murder, that continued to haunt me for a long time.

The details of the killing were unnervingly weird, even for an era and a milieu in which the weird was commonplace. But what gave the story the kind of exemplary significance that prompted the *Village Voice* to devote much of an entire issue to it and that in 1988, almost a decade later, would lead Steven Levy, an investigative reporter, to publish a luridly detailed book about the case *(The Unicorn's Secret: Murder in the Age of Aquarius)* was Ira Einhorn's status as a prankster-theoretician, organizer, and hero of Philadelphia's radical and hippie communities. What obviously most impressed the reporters was Einhorn's success in bridging supposedly irreconcilable constituencies. His advice was sought by the counterculture of Philadelphia's hippie enclave, Powelton Village, and by Robert De Witt, the diocese's Episcopal bishop who temporarily put Einhorn on his payroll; by the city's underground press and by William S. Cashel, the president of Pennsylvania Bell, who scheduled regular meetings with Einhorn to stay better informed about significant social issues; by the advocates of an "alternative university," and by the administrators and students of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where Einhorn had been appointed a fellow for the fall semester just before the discovery of Holly Maddux's body in the locked closet of an enclosed porch overlooking his backyard. Einhorn the murderer, not Holly Maddux his victim, made the event newsworthy; and after an initial revulsion at the disparity of concern, I, too, began to let myself follow the vicissitudes of Einhorn's bizarre career.

Einhorn, I learned, had boasted openly of his craziness. In a 1970 piece he wrote for the Catholic Art Association, he announced that "violence is the simplest mode of contact—it allows touch without formality"; and during his locally famous 1971 campaign for mayor of Philadelphia against Frank Rizzo, he claimed an elective affinity with Charles Manson. Nonetheless, the charm on which he relied for his career, and which, in a sense, constituted his sole occupation, survived even the gruesome revelations at his indictment. He was defended by the city's former district attorney, Arlen Specter, now a United States Senator from Pennsylvania, and owing in large part to his considerable local celebrity, he was released on $40,000 bail. In the event, Einhorn was never brought to trial, since he chose to forfeit bail and flee to Europe, where presumably he is still living today.

Einhorn's public role, like his own temperament, had flourished amidst contradictions and gathered energy from occupying seemingly incompatible positions. Like a stock character whose antics appeared perfectly scripted to play the licensed jester in the drama of a bitterly divided city, Einhorn managed to perform successfully to multiple, and

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mutually suspicious, audiences. Presenting himself as something between a shaman and a clown, Einhorn spoke to anyone who would listen, but without ever allowing his interlocutors to gauge the proportion of seriousness or mockery in his words. A constantly shifting repertoire of tones, attitudes, and ideas served to keep open the maximum number of opportunities for self-promotion, until finally Einhorn was able to move easily between hostile social worlds, becoming a "celebrity rebel" in the vanguard of his supposedly disenfranchised and unheeded peers. Often it seemed that the same longings possessed both the hippies of Powelton Village and the supposed guardians of conventional pieties, so that instead of meeting resistance, people such as Einhorn were welcomed sympathetically by leaders of the very institutions they despised. Being part of Einhorn's conversational circle conferred a certain status on even the most solidly established of his interlocutors: it served to prove the imaginative flexibility and intellectual range of men whose successful careers seemed to leave them feeling vulnerable to charges of philistine mediocrity and "establishment" privilege. Graduates of the same universities from which people such as Einhorn had dropped out, and raised on the same narratives that endowed the rebel with the talismanic glamour of authenticity, the corporate executives, educators, and civic leaders whom Einhorn approached were, at the level of a shared cultural mythology and fantasized desires, already persuaded of his potential significance before any actual dialogue began.

Before his dramatic arrest, Einhorn had placed himself at the center of several highly charged local festivals, including, in April 1967, Philadelphia's first "Be-In," and, three years later, always alert to changing slogans and rallying cries, the April 1970 nationally televised Earth Day in Fairmount Park. Even today, the photographs of those occasions show how immensely popular such celebrations were, ceremonies that in their licensed freedom and joyous suspension of all restraints resembled nothing so much as a contemporary Saturnalia, a re-creation in the parks of the modern city of the carnivalesque market squares of medieval and Renaissance Europe. The central impulse of a "Be-In" was to mark out a utopian space in which to practice the rites of the coming permanent revolution, rites in which there would be no more distinction between participants and spectators since all roles would be interchangeable and neither script nor director necessary. The exuberant revelers massed together to jettison the repressive demands of a society based on hierarchies of value and acts of ordering. In their eyes, the instinctual renunciations exacted by the too-well-regulated lives of their parents and teachers served only to nourish a culture of anxiety and frustrated denial. Yet, like the traditional carnival, that era's Saturnalia

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also had its dark side, its current of anarchic violence and disdain for constraints of any kind, including ultimately, among its sociopathic visionaries such as Ira Einhorn, the prohibition against murder.

"The atrocity of the act carries one above mere contempt," is the way one of the Enlightenment's most ambiguous characters, Diderot's Jean-François Rameau, explains his fascination with the aesthetics of evil. There is a grim sense in which my own response to Einhorn and all that he embodied confirmed some of the most sardonic of Rameau's insights into human nature. In other circumstances, Einhorn, the "cosmic consciousness" who fused radical politics, drugs, and paranormal psychic explorations, would have struck me as more ridiculous than sinister, a figure entirely characteristic of his time and limited by the perfect conjunction of his self-representation and the commonplaces of his day. He was exactly what Rameau calls an "espèce" or "type"—"the most frightening of all epithets," according to Diderot, "because it indicates mediocrity and the ultimate degree of contempt." But no matter how complex and difficult to delineate my response to Ira Einhorn might be, there is no doubt that it went far beyond mere contempt. My response was deeply troubling to me because it appeared to sanction the very pathology that had helped make possible an Einhorn in the first place. I seemed to be acceding to the terms of a dichotomy (the grip of evil, if it is only "original" or ruthless enough, on our imaginations, versus our indifference to pedestrian normalcy) whose actual consequences I found unendurable. And so I began to wonder about the sources of that acceptance, both to understand it better and perhaps, by having done so, to contest more coherently its imaginative force.

Certainly flaunting one's contempt for the constraints of normative, prosaic life, and finding a kind of liberation in the kinship between oneself and a mythologized image of the underground and the outlaw was hardly a novel gambit. Its conventions have been endlessly repeated as part of the rhetoric by which each generation stakes its claim to a radically fresh perception. The nineteenth century in particular bequeathed to us a legend whose governing maxim was crystallized in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* as: "the artist is the brother of the criminal and the madman." The unhappy corollary to this legacy, its "underground" recasting as it were, became authoritative almost as quickly and with perhaps even more effectiveness: if the artist is akin to the criminal and the madman, then they, in turn, are themselves also artists. It is this paradigm within whose terms much of the modern imagination continues to be inscribed. Only it remains easier to commit a crime than a masterpiece, and so if the one proves unattainable the other is surely within the reach of any sufficiently hardened will.

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Our recent culture continually trains us to develop an identificatory sympathy with whatever voice elects itself as the spokesman of a rebellion against "bourgeois oppression." Claiming to represent a constituency of the marginal and victimized is as canny a career move as any available in intellectual life today, and one of the mandatory gestures of that claim is an increasingly shrill dismissal of anti-apocalyptic, prudential modes of reasoning. This is a more paradoxical development than it may at first appear, if only because history would suggest that prosaic rationalism has hardly been the dominant motive in human affairs. Indeed, given the notable success, at both the political and the ideological levels, of the extremist and utopian strains in our thinking, it is the champions of normative quotidian rationality, not their polemical antagonists, who ought to exhibit the *ressentiment* characteristic of impotent failure.

The fantasy of a utopian moment free from all burdens, divisions, and renunciations has existed from the beginning of our culture's self-representation. Although the carnival's leveling rage has usually been imagined as the repressed and secret Other of the dominant culture, that repression was only the thinnest and most transparent of disguises. The disguise was never intended to hide the existence of the underside but merely to mask the fact that it was already entirely within, and indeed central to, the very core of the culture's most self-idealizing moments.

In retrospect, perhaps the most significant aspect of such self-representation, beginning in the 1960s and continuing into our cultural institutions today, was how widely its clichés circulated and how readily they found acceptance, even among those who might be expected to cast a colder, more skeptical eye on the self-aggrandizing claims of the day. It is important to grasp that the people Einhorn fascinated were not, as conventional theory would have it, trying to "co-opt" a revolutionary threat to safeguard their privileges. On the contrary, they themselves genuinely believed in much of Einhorn's message about their own inadequacies, and at the level of wish fulfillment found his way of life both more glamorous and more authentic than their own. No doubt, considering the professional choices and daily lives of his interlocutors, they apparently had little hesitation rejecting the domain whose representative Einhorn claimed to be. But, as we are only beginning to understand with any precision, such rejection is often accompanied, in the words of Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in their book *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression,* by "a psychological dependence upon [those who have been] rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. It is for this reason that what is *socially* peripheral is so frequently *symbolically* central," and that choices and traits that had been "expelled as 'Other,' return as the objects of nostalgia, longing and fascination."

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At least since the French Revolution, the figure of the "mad" artist, the uncompromising, single-minded rebel, and the philosopher working at the (appropriately named) cutting edge of the unthinkable have been staples of cultural mythology, applauded by the consumers of our culture precisely for the signs of excess that testify to how completely the archetype has been embodied. In effect, what seduced Einhorn's admirers was less the particular individual than a literary and philosophical character, one by whom they had already been won over numerous times in the books and movies on which they had also grown up, a character who could draw on all the resources of a long tradition of defiant integrity and refusal to "conform." Einhorn united a seeming contempt for the trappings of middle-class success with a mastery of what Theodor Adorno had called "The Jargon of Authenticity." During the time before Holly Maddux's body was discovered, that combination of jargon and defiant contempt was potent enough to give Einhorn an immediate measure of power over anyone responsive to those cues.

In an eighteenth-century cultural debate such as Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, readers can enjoy watching the author give voice to values that undercut all the positions for which he spent his life fighting. But he can do so only because, although he knows the blindness and compromises of his own camp, he also feels that its victory is already assured, and that, on balance, it is a victory very much in the general interest. What Diderot could not envisage was how very close Rameau's more energetic descendants were to toppling the whole Enlightenment world and to replacing the debates of Parisian salons with the tumbrels of the place de la Bastille and the cellars of the Lubyanka. Still less could Diderot foresee that the death sentences ordered by subsequent revolutionary and reactionary terrors would be formulated in the vocabulary of his own Enlightenment doctrines (the supremacy of the public good), but stoked by a *ressentiment* like that of Jean-François Rameau. The purges sanctioned in the name of an increasingly catastrophic series of experiments in utopian civic transformation inflect with a savagely new undercurrent the way we hear the famous ending of *Rameau's Nephew*: "He laughs best who laughs last."

Since Diderot's day, we have witnessed repeatedly how the rage to overturn a flawed society is more often a product of wounded vanity than of a scrupulous moral consciousness. Too sharp a sense of one's own victimization usually leads to a compensatory urge to tyrannize over others, and the man of *ressentiment*, if given a chance, will prove a bully both to himself and to others, whether his frustration is confined to a cramped room such as the feverish ex-seminarians of Russian literature or incubated in political cells such as those of the Khmer Rouge leaders in their student years in Paris.

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There is abundant evidence that in the mid-1960s significant sections of both the intelligentsia and the principal voices of popular culture were united in a common eagerness to throw off the authority of inherited intellectual, moral, and political conventions. Crystallized in such texts as Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body* (1966), with its academic Dionysianism, R. D. Laing's *The Politics of Experience and The Birds of Paradise* (1967), with its celebration of the schizophrenic as incarnating the truth of a mad society, or Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968), with its homophobia and vision of rape as "an insurrectionary act" provoked by white racism, the era was rich in quasi-prophets, who differed in their specific recommendations but shared a contempt for the pedestrian decencies and mutual concessions of ordinary existence. The longing for an immediate apocalypse, for an instantaneous and utter transformation of "the history of all hitherto existing society" was wedded both to a rejection of the practice of intellectual discrimination and a concomitant refusal to recognize any meaningful frontier between madness and sanity.

I am not especially concerned here to offer another example of the by now rather tired genre of "sixties bashing." But I do want to argue that when we speak so confidently of the utopian longing for a radically open and uninhibited relationship, not just towards one another but towards the conflicting impulses and desires whose interactions shape us, there is a cruel human risk to these idealizations. The viciousness that can be released by the dissolution of the accumulated prudential understanding of a community needs to figure in our thinking about the rhetorical strategies and ideological assertions within which utopian theorizing is articulated. And this necessity is all the more compelling because that theorizing so often prides itself upon transcending the historical consequences of its own axioms. The readiness to sacrifice not so much one's own as everyone else's welfare for the sake of a doctrinaire fantasy is *the* archetypal totalitarian impulse, and it is as traceable in cultural debates as in political programs. It is also, I think, an impulse central to much of the intellectual atmosphere in American university life today.

The fascination with the supposedly marginal and illicit helps explain the increasingly coercive pressure towards "politically correct" thinking exercised by senior professors and, still more curiously, by senior administrators, at numerous universities and national foundations today. Confronted with their invocation of the myth of the outsider and the outcast, a defense of the quotidian, prosaic world, with its undramatic practices and values, is bound to seem like an imaginatively narrow decision. But as recent debates make abundantly clear, it is the idiom of a revolutionary outrage by a sizable contingent of American academics and intellectuals that is the truly conventional gesture, in facile harmony with the institutional pieties of the day.

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Yet it is not really the case that the attempted imposition of an authoritarian and moralistic left-wing policy is owing to the seizure of power by a group of "tenured radicals" carrying out a long-planned scheme, like subversive "moles" infiltrating the British Secret Service in a Le Carré novel. This image, suggested in such books as Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals*, seems to me to err by taking the self-description of the left-wing professoriate more seriously than it deserves. On the contrary, as more skeptical observers such as Camille Paglia have also begun to remark, the majority of today's vocal enforcers of political correctness were entirely conventional, indeed exemplarily docile graduate students and assistant professors during the sixties and seventies, too anxious for professional advancement to risk the slightest gesture of resistance. But the lure of the counterculture, which they rejected while students, exerted an appeal all the more powerful for having been put aside for so long, only for it to emerge with all the accumulated frustration of the intervening years once tenure guaranteed that there was no more risk involved. The problem is not tenured "radicals," it is tenured ex-nerds belatedly struggling to appropriate the glamour of the heroic rebels whose allure they were too cautious to heed at its moment of maximum appeal two decades earlier—a repetition, if you will, of the Philadelphia business communities' enthrallment with Ira Einhorn, but if anything still more bizarre, because so out-of-phase with historical forces everywhere else outside academic life.

When intellectual discourse relies, as it increasingly does nowadays in the universities, on the catch-phrases of political struggle, labeling certain emphases and methodologies as "progressive" and others as "conservative," the attribution of these categories is habitually carried out with a stunning blindness to the fact that (1) it is never as obvious as the fashions of the day take for granted how to determine which practices belong in which camp, and, more problematic still, (2) it is doubtful that either designation has sufficient coherence and rigor to merit its invocation in the first place. The *déformation intellectuelle* in our cultural debates is marked by an indecent haste to label and then to evaluate ideas on the flimsiest and most self-flattering criteria. Any critical analysis of the ongoing attempts to impose a hegemonic standard of acceptable political positions, and any reminder of the immense cost of earlier efforts to give utopian desires a local habitat and name, must risk directly confronting that *déformation*. The values we champion and contest in our theoretical polemics, and the way we can bring into a mutually clarifying perspective our sense of fundamental human hopes and the lived historical experience of specific communities are the central issues at stake in the various quarrels about the new orthodoxy on campuses today.

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Perhaps the sharpest way to formulate my own position is to insist that, in our culture, it is neither sexuality nor the darkest urgings to violence and domination that are repressed. Exactly these issues constitute an enormous, if not actually the major, portion of our cultural conversation about the human psyche. What *is* repressed, though, is the force of the prosaic, the counter-authenticity of the texture and rhythm of our daily routines and decisions, the myriad of minute and careful adjustments that we are ready to offer in the interest of a habitable social world.

Perhaps the fundamental reason why today's cultural battles in the academy are a matter of more than parochial concern is that the narratives on which our consciousness is nourished help script both the fantasies and the actual decisions of our everyday lives. The sway of a powerful imaginative convention is exercised as effectively in mass culture as in great art, and in political judgments as much as in literary criticism. The entire career of someone such as Ira Einhorn—or, more powerfully still, Charles Manson—was only possible because he succeeded in focusing upon himself all of the identificatory sympathy aroused by the character types he claimed to incarnate. What Einhorn and Manson enact all over again is a distinctly American version of a pattern about which Dostoyevski warned a century ago: in the right circumstances, the manipulation of the clichés of mass culture and utopian ideology can lead directly to a *ressentiment* embittered enough to erupt into murder.

I am not concerned here either to belabor Einhorn and Manson or to take them as symbolic of the "sixties." But I do believe that both they and their epoch are characteristic manifestations of a certain utopian radicalism still vitally present at the heart of contemporary *bien pensant* rhetoric. Whether enacted by such men as Einhorn or Manson and their followers in the 1960s or by the "revolutionary millenarians and mystical anarchists of the Middle Ages" whose violent careers Norman Cohn anatomized in *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, when the terms of a theoretical deconstruction of all values spill over into daily life, they usually do so with a savagery that is the grim underside of their exuberant affirmations. It is precisely this bitter side—the relationship between the celebratory and rage-filled aspects of the utopian impulse—that is important to probe. *Ressentiment* combines anger, envy, and pride, the three most destructive of the still entirely pertinent medieval catalogue of sins, but it is the peculiarly modern hypocrisy to cloak such impulses in the language of social compassion.

We need to recognize as well how our most widespread and long-lived myths, together with the conventions of mass culture, supply the rhetoric by which pathological killers could present themselves as the

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accusers of the society they brutalize. That a murderer like Manson almost immediately became one of the most potent icons of his era and himself began to function as a literary myth in subsequent narratives makes clear how seductive the rhetoric of victimization and *ressentiment* is in our culture's imagination and how easily our theoretical fascination with the illicit and the taboo can be marshaled by anyone who has a stake in eliding the differences between killers and their victims.

Dropping Off

NEAL BOWERS

To walk on the bottom of the river,
you must sink steadily,
feet first, letting the air go
a bubble at a time,
toes feeling for the mud,
hands two fins
to steer you down,
your head descending
through an amber atmosphere
into yellow-reds and browns,
beyond the brain's small chatter
and the heart's insistent kicking,
down to the spring-fed current
where the big fish slumber
in a soundless haze,
a twilight silence
pressing at your ears—
under.

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A Month in the Country

DAN JACOBSON

I

Thirty years ago, each married to a daughter of the house,
we lay like truants on the lawn, Roger Owen and I:
he Welsh, ex-working-class, ex-Liverpudlian;
me South African, a Jew, just eighteen months in England.

"It's so difficult to *see* a place like this," he said,
"without the half of English literature getting in the way."

Orchard trees, a stable block, a garden terrace,
half-a-dozen Devon fields tilted
at random-seeming angles, moist heat, tall light,
an inconstant, never-ceasing whisper from the stream;
and the manor house, one wing gone, God knows when,
two remaining, splay-footed somehow, as if straining
to pull upright the chimneys' stubborn slant,
each hewn stone not one color but ten—
the native shades of granite worn by weather,
bestarred with pale lichens and dabs of orange moss.

"Anyhow," he said, "it must be tough to make it here at last,
and find that you've been beaten to it by your woggish sons-in-law."

Today white-haired Roger lives in Jerusalem,
of all places, with a new wife and tiny children,
and I have come to help sell up Brook Manor
(and what the agent calls its "chattels").

II

Not that they have died, the old people, the owners.
Leave the garden on the left, go down the steps,
push the studded side door open,

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to pause a moment in the silence of the lobby.
In one direction, see Gilbert, at eighty-nine,
hunched over last week's copy of *The Radio Times*,
his Terry Anglepoise behind him, an unread page
of unwatched programs blazing in its light;
go into the kitchen and find blind Mary
with blundering fingers, preparing yet another stew.

III

Her hands are reddish-brown; the finger joints
stand out in rings of bone, like nodes upon a bamboo stick.
From the backs of his hands harsh veins protrude,
blue in color, bedaubed in magic ointments
bought as a job lot fifty years before.

IV

The dining room where no one dines now,
is sunken, its leaded windows five feet up.
In the fireplace, under a balk like something from a man-of-war,
burn lumps of pine, larch, oak, sycamore, beech,
  even rhododendron.
Not a log is spared.
Hissing, bubbling, cracking, whimpering,
they all give up the ghost,
show their blackened teeth,
dwindle, fall apart,
and sift down into the heap of ash beneath the iron grate
which no one sweeps from month to month.
How little space it takes up, that heap of ash!
So many trees!

V

Gilbert sleeps on the couch, sits in the chair, stares at nothing.
Once a day, perhaps, he climbs the steps outside
or goes to the stone-floored downstairs lavatory
where, stuck on peeling plaster, is a map of "The Federation
  of Central Africa"
which has lasted far longer than the Federation it depicts.

He emerges now with a plastic pail in his hand.
"For the chickens?" I ask, assuming it to be full of scraps.

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"No," he answers soberly, "just my domestic necessities,"

and shows me the pee slopping within it.

VI

Well, they've gone at last, in clothes they never ordinarily wear,
in a big black car they have never seen before.
Gilbert sitting in the front and Mary at the back,
exactly as arranged.

What lucky people they are!
A daughter to plan all this,
a daughter to welcome them to their new bungalow at the other end
of England,
a daughter come from Canada to make this journey with them,

and me left here, on my own, as stopgap minder of the place.

At the first turn the car roof gleams and is gone.
Nothing else to look at, except the unmoved trees,
wan meadow grass, the woods above, some cloud—
and now the noise of an engine, straining.
Theirs? Someone else's? Who can tell?
It doesn't matter, they've gone for good—
forever, let me rather say—
as I turn back into the empty house.

Mine at last. And all its chattels too,
which they'll never see again. All the heavy stuff
they took over with the house thirty years ago,
the pieces added since, even the unlit logs
in the hall's cold grate, books, papers, gloves, glassware,
everything for which they'd made a place,
and which had made a place for them,
all mine now, or nobody's, until the bidding starts.

VII

Are you really looking for a house—
a house like *this* one too?
If so, why have you brought Granddad along
(who can't climb up the stairs)—
just for the ride?

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And you—moustached American with sneaky walk
(who barely glances at the rooms while babbling on
about his service in the U.S. Air Force,
his marriage to an English girl,
his discharge here, in "this sweet place,"
his plan to "be along" for the auction of effects)?

He was too; and bought a Victorian chest,
one high-backed ornamental chair, ditto,
and Gilbert's Georgian writing desk.

And you—gentlemanly stammerer
(who struggles in silence with his syllables
until they sound out brazenly, in chime-like clusters,
and who comes back often, to wander about the meadow
taking in the views, and tries, but never quite succeeds,
to bring himself to make an offer)?

And you—and you—and you—
agog behind the windows of your cars,
knocking at the front door or the side,
clutching brochures like touring guides—
some of you so timid, some so demanding,
some discreetly asking if you might use the loo—

which one, which one, O tell me true,
will win the prize, from all of you?

VIII

LOT 1: An imposing 17th century Grade II Manor House in a secluded position on the edge of the Dartmoor National Park:*

Reception hall, drawing room, dining room, study, kitchen, scullery, ironing room, cloakroom, 6 bedrooms, dressing room, 2 bathrooms, 4 secondary bedrooms, self-contained flat, garaging, stabling, outbuildings, garden, lake, 3 paddocks, woodland: 23.10 acres.

LOT 2: A block of high-yielding broad-leaved and coniferous woodland: 97.81 acres.

HISTORICAL NOTE: It is understood that the property once formed part of a much larger estate which included the original Buckfast Abbey

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and was for many centuries in the ownership of the Cabell family, certainly since the 13th century. During the Dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII the manor of Buckfast Abbey was surrendered and passed to Sir William Petre. . . . Four years before the restoration of Charles II, Richard Cabell, who was married to Susannah Petre, built the manor house in the valley of the River Mardle, looking out towards Brook Wood. For this purpose granite was carted from the deserted medieval abbey. . . . In 1756 the property was sold to Sir William Clarke who later made it over to the Earl of Macclesfield in settlement of a gambling debt. During the ownership of the property by the Macclesfield family, copper mines were developed. It is known that in 1856 about 370 tons of copper ore were sold for £2508.00 and that about 12 people were employed in the mines at this time. . .

The house is in need of considerable modernisation and improvement, but when completed would form a most comfortable family house, or, subject to planning consent, could form a suitable property for a change of use to a number of different purposes. It is approached from a country lane over a long tree-lined drive terminating in a turning circle in front of the house.

STRUTT & PARKER MICHELMORE HUGHES
24 Southernhay West Exeter Devon

IX

All of them done for the day, and so
I'm free to take another walk about Brook Wood:
the freest yet in thirty years.
No need now to humor Gilbert's whims,
or tend to Mary's multiple misgivings
about her life and his and her four daughters'.
No other son-in-law is here; no wife
(pro tem); no children; no neighbors
I need care about; no Louise and Stan
(that murky couple, brought in to help around the house,
and extruded only after squalid rows and bribes). . . .

"Won't you be scared," someone had asked,
"to be there all alone?" Oh no, it is a dream
long nourished, long rejected, come true
at last. Look at the trees quench their own flame

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in their own shadow, as if the setting sun
can do more to them than they to it.
Look at how many leaves lie underfoot, and how many
have still to fall: each one so tirelessly shaped
just as it should be, like this and that and that again,
not a vein or point or crinkle ever going wrong.
Look at all the far-flung briars—armed
empire-builders, trench-warfare mimics—and hear
the tiny scream they make against your sleeve.
See the signs of Gilbert's potterings-about:
A lean-to shelter against the rain,
a stack of timber that can never warm him now;
stones and tree-trunks across a double-track to block
the cars of courting couples and would-be rubbish-dumpers.
And then "the glen," and, as if from nowhere,
a thirty-foot decline below the path,
a rise as high above it, and a stream's loud voice emerging.

Only its voice, from some leaf-shrouded place,
forever at its sage expostulations—
and not a word in any language that I know!

So back into the woods, for a few yards only,
till earth and leaf mold give way to sand,
sand to gravel, gravel to shattered, scree-like rock,
and I come out on the highest of the mine-dumps.
Now where to look? Below, the drive, the house
(bedraggled with Virginia Creeper),
the neat familiar meadows and the streams'
encompassings; above, more fields and hedgerows
than anyone can count, and an end to them
exactly where the bald moor begins,

and rises still, all rust and hazy mauve,
treeless, fenceless, amphitheatrical,
nearest to the sun, and therefore nearest to the night.

If only I knew what I wanted of it all
or what I wanted of myself! For thirty years
(with some long gaps, when Gilbert's ways
and Mary's sighs were more than I could bear)
I've been returning, and never once stood here,
walked there, listened to these sounds and silences,

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without—without . . . well, what? Imagining,
or trying to imagine, I suppose, how it would be
to love this place and not feel like a fraud
for doing so. Or better still,
to take it all for granted, as if I were indeed
the English country gentleman,
inheritor of woods and glades and grazing rights,
whom I can't speak of without self-scorn.

Not to love what's distant: not to distance
yourself from that which you're compelled to love:
two or three years younger than Gilbert was
when he came here, I'm old enough to know
the value of such gifts, and too old to hope
I might still find them in myself. Unless it's true
that what I really love could not be closer to me:
this selfsame discontent, this wanting to be here
and yet wanting here to be some other person—
or (how the wish again refutes itself !)
to be no one at all, a part of the indifference

I look at, as darkness flows down the funnel
of the moor, birds flaunt themselves above it,
and headlights shine along the road to Holne.

X

They come from the moor,
just rooftop high,
phantoms, tornadoes,
that crack the sky,
crush the breath,
compress the spine,
leave on the eye
as they bank and turn
a black shape, all complete—
wings, tail, flaps, jets,
bubble where the pilot sits—
rocking at ease
over the trees,
above the howl
that fills our ears,

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trailed by thunder
he never hears.

XI

In the woods you'll find the ruins of an older enterprise:
pump houses, shaft heads, workers' cottages,
and, just off the pathway, like sudden absences of light,
unfenced-off pits deep enough to keep you waiting
for the splash and echo of the stones you drop.

Over their softened edges, the bracken wags;
and from them comes a smell not sweet, not sour,
not wet, not dry, just dead, unstirred
since the last man rode down in a bucket,
while his fellows turned the windlass overhead.

All now as hushed as Great Zimbabwe, and as overgrown,
with only moss and mud, it seems, instead of mortar,
to bind together walls which come to nothing,
end anywhere, are pushed aside by random tree trunks
or the collapse of other walls once like themselves.

No roofs at all: just a few moldered beams, perhaps,
and here and there, embedded in the mud,
cogwheels too heavy to lift, a piece of plaited cable,
and a rusting, thigh-high bucket, in which the miners
and the metal ore they picked at once made it to the top.

XII

Three ways to dispose of accumulated papers:
1. fire (inside the house and outside it);
2. flood (down the deepest of the mine shafts);
3. charity (they'll take newsprint for pulping, if there's enough of it.)

XIII

Booted, gaitered, bearded,
faultlessly accented,
carrying on his shoulder
an axe or log or gun:

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a stranger would have sworn
that a country gentleman
(whatever that might mean)
by blood and birth and training
was what he'd always been.

A Lowestoft butcher's son
he'd fled from home to join
the army in '14.
No boy-recruit was bolder
in loudly, proudly claiming
the years he'd still to own;
but by some happy chance
(though he did not think so then)
they posted him to India
and not the front in France
at which he had been aiming.

Twelve years on, in Africa,
where he'd become a teacher,
he met a Scottish girl
of self-effacing manner.
Her background was genteel,
her father well-to-do:
luck, again, was on his side
(this time he knew it well):
on the pillion of his bike
he took her to the clerk who
declared them man and wife.

Headmaster, inspector
of schools, director
of education for what
was then Nyasaland:
that was his working life.
Not dissatisfied with fate
he made it to the top
of his chosen little *kop*,
until the time came round,
to make one last great change.
Determined to go "home,"
he picked out an estate
from an agent's catalogue
and bought it sight unseen.

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Difficult to get to;
ten times too big for comfort;
Heated only by log fires;
watered from a spring that rose up
somewhere within the woods
and inevitably froze up
in December (only to run dry
every other hot July);
dimly-lit; unrepaired;
booby-trapped with unclad,
cascading wooden stairs—
the house was the despair
of all four of his daughters
and his deepest source of pride.

As for his wife, she did
what he told her. She always had.

He became a recluse,
or so he liked to think.
I doubt he left his grounds
as much as twice a year:
(to have his eyesight tested,
perhaps, or get his ear syringed).
The households his daughters
assembled and dismantled
in other parts of England
he never once set foot in.
Neighbors' invitations
he always disregarded.
(It was a sign of strength
to have no obligations.)
Not a box or tin or paper
that fell into his hands
could he bear to see discarded.
All were sorted, hoarded,
added to the piles already there.
He chopped down trees, cleared stones
from paths, patrolled his lands,
read books, watched television,
developed admirations
for unlikely politicians

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(Golda Meir, Chou En-lai),
and laid down the law about them
in loud, emphatic tones
to anyone who dropped in to have a drink.

Thirty years of this? In number
yes; in substance—not quite, no.
The first decades were easy
(well . . . relatively so);
the next five years much harder;
and the ones that came on after
were always touch and go.
What more is there to say?
Week after week saw them grow
more afraid, more confused,
less like what they had been
when first they'd come to stay.

It was the usual story
with its own peculiar twists,
hospitals and phone calls,
long journeys through the snow,
Stan, Louise, grandchildren,
all trying to do their bit,
daughters at such distances
dangers near at hand.

Until at last he gave up—
to everyone's surprise,
for he'd always let them know
that only in Roman fashion
would he ever choose to go.
It's up to you to manage,
he said, do as you think fit,
and took no further interest
in house, or woods, or land,
arrangements, money, plans;
but, timid as an infant,
went off just after sunrise,
on a day like any other,
to that distant bungalow.

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XIV

Yes, you are as I've described: docile
to your husband's whims, self-deprecating,
given to dismay. But if that were all I said
how much I would be leaving out! Your smile,
for instance; the cooking and the baking
you half love and half resent; the books you've read;
the stubborn thicket of your hair and the grace
of your response to treats of any kind;
your prickliness at swank and falsity;
the fine erodings time has made upon your face;
above all, the calm retentiveness of mind
and stoic will that kept you from self-pity
as you slowly felt your way, with damaged sight,
into the night that came before the night.

XV

A few embarrassed neighbors came to the sale of the contents of the house; dealers from as far afield as Oxford, London, and Looe; local gentry or would-be gentry and people from the nearest council estate; hippy girls with long skirts and babies in their arms, accompanied by their unshaven, thin-legged menfolk; a woman who said she was starting a home for the aged nearby, and therefore was in need of beds and bed linen; the second wife of a man who had once been married to one of my sisters-in-law.

The better-off women had soft complexions and hard blue eyes; they wore pale anoraks and windcheaters; their husbands were in tweeds. The dealers were youngish, often moustached, conspiratorial with one another and always watchful. From time to time thick rolls of notes (fifties and twenties) appeared in their hands and disappeared again, like conjurers' props.

People came in cars, vans, station wagons, lorries, Range Rovers: many pulled behind them trailers and horse boxes. They parked anywhere they could get their protesting engines and spinning, mud-spitting tires to take them: on and off the drive, in the lane behind the house, among the trees in the orchard, in the nearest of the meadows.

"No Smoking" signs had been put up all over the house, so the smokers gathered in furtive but convivial little groups just outside the front door.

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Every room in the house looked as if some mad person had chosen to shove together items of furniture in the most random manner possible: anything could be anywhere, with no regard to order or plausibility. ("It keeps up interest," the auctioneer had said by way of explanation.) Bedclothes and napery had been tied together in big swatches: these were hung up like felons or suicides from picture rails and from lines specially rigged for them.

In order to take advantage of the setting, the auctioneer himself had brought in many items: bronze boardinghouse gongs; oversize, oval china plates; chairs with coir starting out of the broken leather of their seats and elaborately yawning lions' heads worked into the wood of their arms and headrests.

The auctioneer was sallow-skinned, bespectacled, bent outwards at the knees, and utterly tireless. When I remarked on this at the end of the afternoon, he answered with fierce sincerity, "It's my *life*!" It had been his father's life too: looking comically like his son, only forty years on, he occasionally climbed the little ladder, with its attached platform, to take over the selling.

Jostling, shuffling, or drumming their feet on bare boards, most of the throng (two hundred people in all, perhaps) followed the auctioneer from room to room. When any costly piece came up for sale they revealed at once their ringside appetite for a fight. Each of the more exciting of these bouts began as a free-for-all, turned rapidly into a duel, and at last produced a shaky victor and a chagrined loser.

The faces of the bidders would go quite still; they looked nowhere; once the combat was won or lost they lowered their heads and made solemn pencil marks in their catalogues, while a sigh and murmur went up from the few who had dropped out earlier and the many who had been onlookers throughout.

"It's all right for *her*," a dealer said to me, in a tone of moral outrage, after a wealthy local householder had stubbornly outbid him for a Queen Anne bureau. "She doesn't have to make a profit on what she buys!"

A fortnight's work by my wife and me had cleared the rooms of all that was unwanted and unsaleable in them: thirty years' fanatical accumulations of junk and sentiment had been disposed of. Throughout that time prospective buyers of the house had come and gone. Then the auction-

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eers' men had moved everything about, labeled everything, dumped their own hideous goods in various rooms. Then there had been a day and a half for "viewing" the items to be auctioned. So we could hardly have been better prepared for this occasion; or (in my own case) less prepared for what I actually felt about it. Never could I have guessed, as one item after another was disposed of, that incredulity, sorrow, a stifled "No!" constantly rising up inside me, even dread at the inexorableness of what was being done, could cohabit with a gambler's cupidity, with the hue-and-cry excitement of the chase, with an eagerness to hear the figures babbled by the auctioneer grow larger and more improbable still.

When the selling was all over, another activity instantly began: a frenzy of queueing to pay and of dismantling to carry off, of humping and bumping larger and smaller pieces up and down the stairs, of gathering them in disparate and orphaned groups under the trees, of loading, padding, lashing, revving, discussing, dispersing.

Estranged from itself, emptied of itself, the house had become a place of gaunt echoes, torn-up notes and torn-off tickets, patched walls, wastelands of dust never seen before, pieces of twine, muddy footprints, abandoned newspapers, and lunch wrappings.

XVI

It's smiling and somber, alluring and shabby,
the little stone head they dragged from the abbey
and stuck on the stable wall.

With its eyes at a slant from its sinister nose,
there's nothing on earth will make it disclose
from its place on the stable wall

if they put it up there by way of a jest,
or secretly hoped their deed would be blessed
by the face on the stable wall.

For thirty years now I've been meeting its stare—
one tenth of the time its been hanging up there
so high on the stable wall!

How can anyone tell from its features alone
what the sculptor intended who chiselled the stone
that's fixed to the stable wall?

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But seeing I'm leaving I'll say what I choose:
I'm just about certain it doesn't like Jews,
that face on the stable wall.

XVII

How many kinds of mist? And times of mist?
How many places for the mist to close over or reveal?
How much space for it to vanish into?

And today, how the grass shines which the mist has left behind!

Remembering the children here, picking blackberries,
or paddling in the lake, or running up and down the drive,
or plunging on their own (but not too far) into the woods,
while their shouts went ahead of them, behind them, above them
as if the air itself had forged those cries
and would no more forget the trick of it
than the children's skins and eyes would lose their gleam,
or their hair the smell of damp and wood smoke,
or their voices the urgency of all they had to say—
remembering, and thinking of where they are,
and what they do, and what they have become,
I remember also certain falls of rain
so slight and silent I never knew them to be there
until I looked across the meadow
and saw the shafts of darkness coming down.

XVIII

How strange to think that so much yearning, expectation,
baffled staring into the opacity of time-to-come,
should resolve themselves to nothing more than this:
a memory of yearning, doubt, unknowingness.

XIX

Up there, the moor, as little touched perhaps
(for all the roads across it, and stone-walled fields
cut into it) as any stretch of England, with its slow curves,
clenched tors, and marshy places that blink like tin
when the sun comes out, and then are gone again,
exposed to what the weather always has in mind for them;

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down here, another country, one full of promises,
it seems, where each gap in the high-banked lane reveals
both more and less than you expect—a timbered hillside
that closes up the view, or ten such hillsides at a glance
and all the fields between, sinking a moment later
to a secret copse or stream, a house, an iron shed,
and a sky as elaborate as what it looks upon,
and yet no wider than the hedges' ragged parallels:

two landscapes, then, and who's to say which is the more
remote? The one where nothing much has happened
or ever will, and (now it's autumn) little can be heard
but the breeze that chafes forever at the gorse;
or the one composed and re-composed by strangers
dead and living, where chain saws shriek at intervals
and trucks and tractors are almost always at it?
A thousand years ago, let's say, someone picked this site.
He saw the streams emerging from the moorland coomb,
a stretch of level ground that would eventually be cleared
to make three meadows, the wooded slopes' encroachments,
and all of them conjoined below the green half-wheel
of Pridhamsleigh. There the house was built.
What's thirty years to this? Or even to the time elapsed
since, with stolen stone, they gave the house its present shape—
the shape which it will keep (we must assume)
until official "Grade II* listings" and "designated areas"
of "outstanding natural beauty" lose their force?

Thirty years? Long enough for Gilbert to outstay
the neighbors nearest to him, and their successors
and their successors too (who mostly made their money
well before they came here, in Hong Kong or Singapore
or by building vacation homes in Gozo). That's one answer
to the question. Another is to think what he and Mary were
when they arrived; or to think, again, of failures
still untasted when this place was new to me,
hurts yet to be delivered and received
(and who can say which were the more injurious?),
visitors I brought here who have died since then.

How we hunger for transcendence! And since we know
that nothing will endure for each of us beyond

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our own perceiving of it, how we love
whatever's momentary, vanishes the soonest!
(As if a leaf should hanker to become like stone
or stone to be a leaf.) So we build and buy and plan
and plant—and try our hardest to forget that living mind
alone can measure time, and never stone that lies
where it is put, or leaves which rust away each autumn
and come back a few months later, certain of redress.

Just another night and half a day and we'll be gone.
A stranger to this house I know so well, to these woods
I've wandered through so many times, to the history
of which the land is part and which is part of it,
I want as much as any Macclesfield or Petre
to make this place my own and keep it so forever.
It's all in vain, of course. Poems are like houses:
built out of present need for strangers to inhabit.

XX

She has secured a power of attorney from both her parents;
purchased the bungalow to which they have moved;
supervised their journey to it, and the packing and transport
of the furniture which preceded them there;
made innumerable calls to lawyers, agents, accountants, and others;
paid all the bills;
burned (without perusal) several hundred letters;
telephoned her mother or one of her sisters every evening;
settled arguments, with various interested parties, about fishing rights,
mineral rights, water rights, and rights of way;
presented most of her father's books to Exeter University;
tied into neat parcels those books and pieces of china she has chosen
to keep;
tested all the keys and attached to each its proper tag;
given one last polish to the long hall table, which stands where it always
stood, awaiting its new owner;
returned to the depot several clumsy, cobwebbed cylinders of Calor gas;
scrubbed the sink;
brushed out the fireplaces;
cleared the leat that runs through the kitchen yard;
found a home for the chickens;
disposed of her father's shotgun;
distributed keepsakes to acquaintances;

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brought in someone to clean the Aga;
inspected and locked the outbuildings;
swept the floor of every room;
closed the creeper-encrusted windows;
drawn together the shutters in the hall, the morning room, and the study;
checked the taps and switched off lights at the main;

made lists daily, in a blue-covered exercise book, of the tasks still
awaiting her attention;
crossed out in turn each one attended to;

wept several times;
reproached herself for taking on a responsibility for her parents' lives
she could never discharge;
asked herself if it would not have been kinder to leave them where
they were, to die in their own way;
blamed herself for not being able to do so;
wished herself gone;

locked up and left.

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TEACHING

Alexander Gerschenkron

DONALD McCLOSKEY

We must have had teachers who made us teachers. In my own case from the sixth grade to my first teaching job those teachers were (I write them out in a verse) Stanton, Melcher, Brisbois, Gustafson, Meyer, Gerschenkron, Temin, and Fogel. Alexander Gerschenkron was not the best teacher or the best economist or the best historian among these—nor even, I think, the best human being. But he was the best scholar I have known.

Gerschenkron was an economic historian and a comparativist, writing on the European past and the Soviet present. He taught from 1948 to 1975 in the department of economics at Harvard, producing, if that is quite the word, scores of graduate students and writing a moderate number of books. He made an impression. Students and colleagues lived in awe of him, and not only because they were merely economists while he was everything, a polymath ranging over statistics and Greek poetry and a great deal in between. Other people who know everything—the Bernard Lewises and the Albert Hirschmans of the scholarly world—tell stories about Gerschenkron's erudition and wit as though even they, too, were impressed.

He was born in Odessa in 1904 (we think, for, like his friend the economic historian of the Middle Ages M. M. Postan, a fellow Russian resident among the gullible Westerners, Gerschenkron liked to make up stories about his life). His family fled the civil war in 1920 to the comparative calm of Austria, where he received a *gymnasium* education, adding Latin, Greek, French, and German to his Russian.

Later he acquired languages with astonishing ease—Swedish one week, Bulgarian the next. The story circulated that he needed Portuguese for some minor purpose, and, knowing all the other Romance tongues, found mastering Portuguese grammar the job of an afternoon. Reading a stack of easy Portuguese that evening, he at first found the going tough, but gradually easier. Suddenly it clicked, and he was reading fluently. Several minutes into this triumph, however, he noticed that the text he had picked up was not Portuguese but English. He had not detected the change in language.

The only language of scholarship he appears not to have known is Hebrew. He was strangely coy about whether or not he was Jewish, which we all assumed he was. A classmate of mine used to try out Yiddishisms on him, making appointments to see him in his office for this purpose, hoping to trap him in a knowing smile, but he got nowhere.

Gerschenkron studied economics and politics at the University of Vienna, managed a motorcycle firm for a few years, and worked during the 1930s as an economist in Viennese research institutes. The *Anschluss* drove him to the United States, a double refugee in the intellectual migration (he told a story about coming across Switzerland on the passport of a St. Bernard dog, but no one believed this). During the 1940s, like many of the migrants, he moved from job to job, teaching at Berkeley (where he claimed to have helped build Liberty ships after hours for the war effort) and working on the staff of the Federal Reserve Board from 1944 on. It was hard for American academic life, stuffy and second-rate as it generally was then, to absorb these

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astonishing people from *Mitteleuropa*. I do not know what possessed the Harvard faculty of economics in 1948, well-known at the time for its anti-Semitism, to hire Gerschenkron as the replacement for Adam Payson Usher. Perhaps he impressed them, too.

Beyond his early work in measuring Soviet industrial output, his main scholarly contribution was a "theory of relative backwardness," which gave an account of the differing ways that European countries industrialized. He first formulated the theory in 1952, at age forty-eight, and then tested and elaborated it for the rest of his life. He argued that a country such as Russia, backward relative to Britain when it embarked on industrialization, did not go through the same stages. It leapt over them, using the state as a substitute for the missing prerequisites of economic growth. Growth was force-fed in Russia, and to a lesser extent in Germany, with consequences for the character of the places. Russia grew with giant enterprises instead of small firms, centralized control instead of competitive markets, an overbearing military-industrial complex instead of peace-loving capitalists.

I first met Gerschenkron in the fall of 1964, when he was sixty and eminent for these thoughts, in the first week of my graduate education. He was teaching his year-long course on European economic history required of all the would-be economists. Harvard had, to my relief, just gotten rid of the language requirement for the Ph.D. in economics (you were allowed to substitute mathematics and statistics); it had shortly before gotten rid of the requirement that economists learn the history of their discipline; and later, in Harvard's final contribution to breadth in economic education, it got rid of the requirement in economic history, the study of which Henry Rosovsky has described as "virtually the only course in the graduate economics curriculum that directly assaulted the provincialism of most students." But until Gerschenkron retired you had to take a full year of him, writing two long papers applying economics to some event in European economic history and suffering an assault from a most unprovincial man.

In 1964, as it happened, Gerschenkron puzzled us for a few weeks with the theory of index numbers, his great formal love in economics, and then fell ill before getting to any economic history. A bad heart plagued him throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and this was another long episode. One of them—not this one, I think—was brought on by a heroic sprint he made along the platform of the subway at Harvard Square to stop a despondent Soviet visitor from throwing himself under the wheels of the train. When I first encountered Alexander Gerschenkron, he was slight of build, thinned down, I was told, from a pre–heart attack plumpness. His office was littered with bottles of brandy, a glass of which he offered to all comers. The brandy was supposed to be for his heart, you see, although Rosovsky remembers it from before the heart trouble. Again, one never knew.

One never knew much with Gerschenkron. William Parker of Yale, another distinguished economic historian, fleetingly Gerschenkron's student, has complained of the master's skill at keeping everyone around him off balance. Paul David of Stanford, also distinguished and also his student, describes Gerschenkron discovering one day that this particular student was not a morning person; henceforth all their meetings were scheduled for 6:00 A.M. at the Faculty Club.

He was on sick leave the entire 1964–65 academic year, and I therefore was not taught economic history by the man in a classroom. Barry Supple, a young Englishman then at the business school across the river, and Albert Imlah, of Tufts University, filled in for Gerschenkron that year. We were given the Gerschenkron reading list and papers, though—the papers being the only opportunity for creativity in a mind-stunning program of mainly useless formalisms (economics has not changed since then), and the subject fascinated me.

So did Alexander Gerschenkron, from a distance. My father was a colleague (in political science) and, like all the faculty, was filled with admiration for Gerschenkron. They were friends, in the non-intimate way that two such people could be friends, exchanging learned witticisms and sporting news over the lunch table. I have my father's copy of Gerschenkron's most famous book, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (1962), inscribed "To Bob, this small offering to Aesculapius with warmest personal regards and all good wishes, Alex, January 1963," when my father was in the hospital after a botched appendicitis operation. The classical reference was characteristic and the Socratic echo appropriate, too.

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It was from my father about then that I first heard the Ted Williams story. Gerschenkron, who was a serious student of baseball and basketball—it was part of his commitment to his new nation—claimed to know Ted Williams, the retired star of his beloved Boston Red Sox. "Williams, you know," he would say, "is no boob. In fact, he's quite well read, and has a special interest in economics and economic history. But he expresses himself, naturally, in baseball terms." Oh, is that so? What does he think about Ken Galbraith? "He says about Galbraith: 'He hits very high flies to very short left field.' " What about Walt Whitman Rostow? [This was before Rostow's adventures in the Johnson administration, and therefore the joke was merely scholarly.] "Ted says, 'Rostow hits a home run every time he steps up to the plate. But he forgets to touch the bases as he runs it out.' " Here was a scholar. The next academic year I signed up for his seminar.

There began a run of three years in which I learned my trade. To say that Gerschenkron "taught" it to me would be too Anglo-Saxon and direct. The Latin is better: I was educated, drawn out. Gerschenkron never spoke during the main business of the seminar, but sat puffing his pipe (a substitute for cigarettes) and watching one graduate student teach another. I recognize now that he had a brilliant sense of ceremony and honor. He always scheduled his seminar in the evenings, once a week, and arranged for proper seminar rooms, never classrooms, which gave the seminar a dignity hard to achieve between 10:30 and 11:50 A.M., TuTh in PHBA 213. He played the judge listening to the attorneys in the well. No other faculty members were allowed to attend, except his own student Peter McClelland, an assistant professor until he moved on to Cornell. A paper would be presented, distributed in advance, and criticized by the other students.

Gerschenkron's only direct contribution would be a Delphic comment at the end, before closing the proceedings. Often it would be evaluative, and one would ache for a hint of approval. Approval was never more than a hint, to preserve the scarcity value. A particularly unimaginative paper on subject X, which had been utterly demolished by the junior devils, evoked only the summarizing remark, formed of gentle irony, "Well, we certainly know more about subject X than we did two hours ago."

Honor, he understood, is crucial for intellectual work. People do not go to graduate school, even in economics in the boom time of the late 1960s, to make money. They go and stay for honor. I have tried to persuade university administrators that honor is a good substitute for cash in bad times, but they are obsessed with budget cuts and the *numerus clausus* for registered races and cannot hear. Gerschenkron gave out honors as though they mattered. An *A* in his course was something special, based wholly on one's performance on the big paper. He often did not get around to reading the final exams, which irritated the students but made pedagogic sense. The point of graduate school is scholarship, not quiz mastering. The interviews in his office were made into little ceremonies. Conversations in the hallway were made to tell. He gave fellowships from a Rockefeller grant that he got when he realized that a new economic history, more analytic than the old, was coming into being, and he gave out the fellowships with gravity suiting the honor.

He scrounged some office space for us, the honored economic historians, in the attic of the old *Daedalus* building on Linden Street. We were to have a "workshop." The word *workshop* was a Gerschenkron favorite. The work of scholarship was similar to the work done in a motorcycle repair shop—the "bench science" of a laboratory, as the chemists and biologists call it. In a preface to the book of his student Albert Fishlow he praised "the statistical appendixes in which the author offers a full insight into his laboratory and without which no real appreciation of the importance of the study and of the validity of its interpretative results is possible." It was an honor to labor in the "workshop." He would have been appalled by our ignorant motto, characteristic of young economists, which we hung over the door (he never came up: more laissez faire): "Give us the data and we will finish the job."

What Gerschenkron understood about teaching graduate students that most of us do not is how important their tribes are for their education. He did not wish to be our friend; he was willing to be our totem, our untouchable king, a remote if sardonically amused father from whom honor derives. The Baker Report a decade ago from the University of Chicago made this point about the later years of graduate school, stressing that graduate students need an honorable social life con-

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nected to their intellectual life; but again no one has listened.

One can justify in such terms a practice that will seem unjustifiable otherwise. Gerschenkron "supervised" dissertations with a notably light hand. In my case, which was not unusual, we had in four or five years from start to finish many chats, much sparring about the defenestration of Ulm (a favorite topic for exhibiting erudition) or the merits of an English as against a Latinate vocabulary or the chances this season for the Celtics, but exactly one discussion about my dissertation, and that desultory. In this he was practicing a theory of graduate teaching, not merely avoiding students. On the contrary, he interviewed every one of the fifty students in his graduate class each term for the papers. Unlike many economists, he was not always rushing about advising governments or giving seminars (I never got him to come out to Chicago to give a paper, for example) and was available for talk. But he would not let you whine about your work and get detailed instructions from the master. I later learned that some professors have the opposite theory, that a graduate student should be led in detail. This results in the giving of many degrees and the production of much normal science; but whether it results in creative scholars is not so clear.

He taught by example, but at home, not on the lecture circuit. Waiting in Gerschenkron's astonishingly chaotic office for an interview one day, I received from the nearest of numerous stacks of books and magazines a lesson in the scholarly life, the sort of lesson that professors forget they give. The stack contained a book of plays in Latin, a book on non-Euclidean geometry, a book of chess problems, numerous statistical tomes, journals of literature and science, several historical works in various languages, and, at the bottom of it all, two-feet deep, a well-worn copy of *MAD* magazine.

Ceremony was the key to such a mythologized theory of teaching, as when his graduate students were invited up to his dacha in New Hampshire for an annual meal, filled with ironic ceremonies. There was, for one thing, the ceremony of the ride up, if one went in his car. He drove like a madman, at Italian speed but without Italian skill. One time the car broke down, and I went out and fiddled with the carburetor, fixing it. Gerschenkron ever after touted my mechanical skill (of which I had none) by contrast with his Continental ignorance of the internal combustion engine. Come to think of it, the pose was odd in view of his stint selling motorcycles. Probably it was one of his little jokes.

The compulsory croquet game at the dacha was certainly a joke. The students and spouses would participate, but Gerschenkron always won because he cheated. He would make up house rules of great ingenuity to his own advantage. If, nonetheless, there was a chance of him losing, he would adjourn the game, for it was suddenly time for drinks indoors. The dinners in New Hampshire were occasions to meet his wife, who did not have the cheerful disposition of her husband but had some of the same learning. They wrote an article together on translations of Shakespeare, which was published in a literary journal. Gerschenkron delighted in publishing in literary journals—it was claimed, not impossibly, but I take it falsely, that when Roman Jakobson retired in 1960 from his chair in Slavic literature at Harvard, Gerschenkron was offered it.

If honor was important for maintaining scholarly standards among students and colleagues, then dishonor had to have a place, too. Gerschenkron could be harshly evaluative, in a way that makes Americans wince. He wrote a devastating review of a translation from Russian of a book in economics, attacking in detail the author's apparently feeble command of the language. The translator had the temerity to approach Gerschenkron at a conference and say amiably, "I want you to know, Professor Gerschenkron, that I am not angry about your review." Gerschenkron replied, "Angry? Why should you be angry? Ashamed, yes; angry, no."

The scholarly ethos of care is prominently commended in Gerschenkron's reviews and in his footnote polemics. Carefulness in the European scholarly tradition consists of avoiding error in detail and putting forward conclusions with suitable modesty. Gerschenkron here did not inhabit the world of modern economics, in which theory is said to provide a check on facts and in which a blackboard exercise is said to have "policy implications." Most particularly he detested theories of history that can in their rigidity supply bridges across evidential voids—Marxism most notably—and favored theories such as the one of Arnold Toynbee that provided merely a way to shape the facts into a story.

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Sir John Hicks, later a Nobel laureate in economics and one of the great theorists in the field, wrote a lamentable book called *A Theory of Economic History* (1969), based on his ruminations (untempered by enough trips to the library) about what medieval life must have been like—that is, theoretically speaking. In the book Hicks advanced the notion, which some other equally close students of the period have adopted, that manorialism and serfdom were voluntary exchanges of labor for "protection" between lord and peasant. Gerschenkron noted in a typical turn that "the possibility that the main, if not the only, danger against which the peasant very frequently was in need of protection was the very lord is not mentioned."

He wrote judgmentally about scholarly discourse, raising up or breaking down another scholar's ethos. Such judgments are usually suppressed in scholarly prose. In a few pages early in *Europe in the Russian Mirror* he admired Tugan-Baranovskii: "valuable contribution"; "probably the most original Russian economist, . . . amazingly broad in his interests"; and, his greatest compliment, "a serious scholar." Such compliments served, in fact, more to honor the author than the subject—which, after all, was their rhetorical purpose. The author exhibited the good taste to admire the best work. The old Russian economist's "amazingly broad interests" turned out to be merely subjects within economics; whereas the writer himself, also a Russian economist, ranged over mathematics, Western literature, and the history of baseball.

David Riesman wrote in *Constraint and Variety in American Education* that academic life, "looked at from the perspective of our national problems, . . . seems remote and crazy like a sport, and it so strikes perhaps the majority of students. But . . . we always hope that if we run well enough, some students will run the race too, and become as crazy as we." Gerschenkron's theory of teaching was successful at making his students as crazy as he.

To speak in rhetorical terms, he taught by ethos. The beginning, or exordium, of a speech is meant in the classical system to establish ethos, the good character that warrants attention. Gerschenkron's presentation of self was largely ethical in this sense. He did not teach by *explicatio* or *amplificatio*.

A person's life is an argument. We think less of Marx for his neglect of Jenny and his ignorance of physical work; and we think less of the modernist heroes of economics now for their frank appeals to selfishness, exhibited in their lives. Gerschenkron shaped his life to better values. Although I do not think he was a paragon, he stood the bigger tests. In the year of tested values, 1968, for example, this private man spoke publicly against nihilism at Harvard. He gave a famous speech to one of the tumultuous faculty meetings (at which my father played whip to John Dunlop's leadership of the "conservatives"), "The Most Amazing Thing," based on a Hans Christian Andersen tale. (The year was a strain on my father, who had an unknown heart condition himself; he died the next summer.)

After the torrent, Gerschenkron retreated for a while to the Institute for Advanced Study. There another Gerschenkron tale was generated, a tribute more to his erudition than to his originality. An administrator from Princeton came out to the Institute with the strange purpose of discussing a proposal for a black studies program. Academic life was abuzz with the black power intimidations at Cornell. The Princeton administrator had an understandably difficult time getting the fellows, Gerschenkron among them, to see the merits in the proposal. He finally gave up arguing and blurted out, "Well, we have to do something: after all, they have the guns." A stunned silence descended on the group, into which Gerschenkron dropped the reply: "When I hear the word *guns*, I reach for my culture."

When the Soviet tanks rolled in Prague, Gerschenkron spoke eloquently at the meetings of the American Economic History Association, at Brandeis that year (Rostow, I remember, would rush out of meetings to take telephone calls from President Lyndon B. Johnson), against international participation in a conference at Leningrad. His advocacy, like that at Harvard, was unsuccessful, and the association decamped to Leningrad, honoring the tyrants.

You can see why his students worshipped him. He was, as the kids say (and so did we), cool—that is, self-possessed, courageous, outspoken, witty, an ethos attractive to the young but combined with a mature scholarly purpose.

What did I learn from such a walking exordium? It was not his particular theories of economic history (assessed recently in a book

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edited by two other students, Richard Sylla and Gianni Toniolo). It was his way of life, and especially his mixing of genres, mixing democratic with highbrow amusements, literature with science, economics with history, mathematics with words. I formed an image of a complete scholar, that American scholar we honor in this magazine. He is not, as Emerson said, Thinking Man but Man Thinking; not a specialized thumb or brain strutting about, but a whole person who exercises all powers.

The image is of course crazy, and depressing to boot, because none of the students could come close to the master in languages or experience. But holding it up at least keeps you from sneering at other knowledge. Specialists comfortable with being partial human beings get angry when someone says what is true of us all—that they are shamefully ignorant. Gerschenkron would counsel us: Be ashamed, yes; angry, no.

I think all his students learned this. Something I learned myself, which does not appear to be shared by many of his other students, is the importance of words in thinking. That is, I learned from his example that wordcraft, rhetoric, runs even a mathematical field like economics.

Gerschenkron himself recognized the rhetoric in science, and he especially recognized social theories as metaphors. He was aware that words are not mere tags for things behind them but have their own force in the scholar's argument. His main contribution to scholarship was to revise radically the metaphor of social "stages," which had dominated nineteenth-century and much twentieth-century social thought. Henry Maine, Auguste Comte, Friedrich List, Karl Marx, Werner Sombart, Bruno Hildebrand, and latterly Walt Rostow thought of a nation as a person, with predictable stages of development from birth to maturity. The stage theorists took the child to be the father of the man. Gerschenkron was the new Freud, noting the pathologies arising from stages missed or badly taken, casting doubt on the iron law of succession.

Gerschenkron justified the economistic metaphor in a mainly Kantian rather than a Baconian way. He appears to have become in time more Kantian, becoming more convinced as Kant said that "concepts without perceptions are empty; perceptions without concepts are blind." The Kantian points of view, when you think of the matter in economic terms, are similar to weights in a statistical index of industrial output. That is, they are not things in themselves. William Parker has argued that Gerschenkron's experience of transplantation from Russia to Austria to America led him to the problem of point of view. Parker's story fits Gerschenkron's fascination with index numbers, relative backwardness, and literary translation (most notably a devastating assault on Nabokov's translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, in *Modern Philology*, May 1966).

He was the best scholar, I would say, because he was the best rhetorician, not in some cheap definition but in its oldest and most honorable one, what Werner Jaeger called "the first humanism." Words, Gerschenkron recognized, are what we have in common, not things.

A rhetorical reading of Gerschenkron does not reveal him as a non-scientist, a mere word spinner. He shaped in his work a story of his own life, one of care and precision and attention to the words themselves. Master scientists are master rhetoricians, word spinners in no dishonorable sense, or else they do not win the argument. Gerschenkron's science was model building but also storytelling. He showed me that science is rhetoric, all the way down.

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MISEDUCATION

Why Johnny Needn't Read

J. C. FURNAS

During Prohibition, standard brands of French vermouth—de-alcoholized to make selling them legal—were advertised in American magazines. The bottles carried printed labels sternly warning purchasers *not* to add several ounces of potable alcohol to the contents.

That came to mind when I saw in capital letters in the front matter of the Cliffs Notes "study guide" to *The Pickwick Papers* ("Your Key to the Classics," $3.95): "These notes are not a substitute for the text itself. . . . Students who attempt to use them in that way are depriving themselves of the very education that they are presumably giving their most vital years to achieve." That appears in each of the 230-odd Cliffs booklets devoted to freeze-drying "classics" from *Absalom, Absalom!* to *Wuthering Heights*. Cliffs' upscale competitor, Monarch Notes (191 items, at $3.50–$4.95) chimes in crisply. The smaller rival, Barron's Book Notes (102 items, at $2.00–$2.50) pluckily fields the hardest-selling blurb: "Makes Literature Come Alive. Recommended by Teachers. Helps you develop your own ideas. Improves your performance in class. Prepares you for exams. Paves the way to better grades. Expert analysis of plot/characters/themes/style. Livelier writing, more up-to-date comment than any other series. The only book notes with multiple-choice and essay tests. Clear, concise, fun to read. GIVE YOURSELF THE BARRON'S ADVANTAGE." Its warning, though brief, is as firm as any: "We shouldn't have to remind you that Barron's Book Notes are not substitutes for the originals."

Newsweek, however, recently chuckled: "Admit it, in college you probably used Cliffs Notes to avoid having to read 'Paradise Lost.' " Only a cynic could doubt that, like the French vermouth industry circa 1928, these study-guide publishers in 1992 are all deeply chagrined when unscrupulous young folks disregard their warnings. Yet this mass delinquency has been gaining momentum these thirty years. In a single day in my semi-rural county I asked fourteen thirtyish-to-fortyish people, male and female, with whom I chanced to be dealing—minor hospital staff, pharmacist, bank officer, store manager, dental hygienist, typewriter repairman, and so on—whether Cliffs Notes had infiltrated their schooling. Of the eleven who answered "Sure," several added: "So you didn't have to read the book." For Johnny, that notoriously reluctant reader, Barron's, Cliffs, and Monarch (hereinafter referred to collectively as BCM) are a national institution in the high school and two- and four-year college cultures, and are widely relied on to get passing marks in required literature courses. My overseas operatives report that similar infestations appear in Britain and France but so far not as elaborately or on the same scale as in America. (This curious industry has already added to literary folklore a morsel possibly apocryphal but by no means improbable: Woman customer of a bookstore rejecting a *Great Expectations* offered to her, saying she knows, of course, it's by Dickens as the title page says, but there must be another book of the same title by a man named Clifford Notes and that's the one her son asked her to get for him.)

My procedure in examining this phenomenon was to study forty-odd specimen "guides," mostly chosen at unscientific random. The lit-

✪ J. C. FURNAS's most recent book is his autobiography, *My Life in Writing: Memoirs of a Maverick*.

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erature that BCMs honor is of unmistakably high average quality. (Shortcomings will be noted later.) It comprises a rich compost of indispensable writings, not in the Great Books way, though that has its merits, but as a miscellany of augustly famous stuff that you would sorely miss if some cerebral accident erased it from your mental storehouse. You probably came by much of what you believe in by reading those writings; whereas, though the big letters on BCM covers say *Moll Flanders* or *Animal Farm,* the hundred-or-so printed pages inside make those "joys forever" sound as dull as the begat chapters in the Pentateuch and could not conceivably persuade any but determinedly bookish youngsters to try the books referred to.

Barron's *Tom Jones* is a fair sample. Its cover promises and its 122 pages supply "Plot Synopsis, Lively Scene-by-Scene Discussion, Analysis of Characters, Style, The Author's Life and Times, Sample Tests With Answers, Term Paper Ideas." (Most BCMs throw in weighty paragraphs showing the student how to write that term paper as though he had thought it all up himself.) A state university instructor—BCM title pages identify many such as midwives—performs this delivery with some credit. His bouquet of snippets of critics' opinions of *Tom Jones* cites V. S. Pritchett, F. R. Leavis, and J. B. Priestley, better choices than BCMs usually show. For a scholar-teacher, he is curiously shaky on the exact meanings of such words as *infidelity, evidently, apparently.* The explorer of BCMs soon gets used to such failings. Cliffs' M.A. eviscerating *Uncle Tom's Cabin* confuses Mississippi steamboats with ships, cotton plantations with New Orleans town mansions; and shows a fumbling grasp of English: ". . . [a certain phrase] would disconcert the reader from Stowe's message." Cassie "taunts [Simon Legree] that she has other-worldly powers"; and actually employs that most half-witted of maimed clichés "Topsy could care less."

Not that such gaffes would bother most readers, even if they could spot them. But in readers' terms, the relative uselessness of the *Tom Jones* "Plot Synopsis" should. A weak attention span, malnourished by MTV and comic books, makes students shun contemplating reading anything as long as *Tom Jones.* But even this guide's oxymoronic "synopsis" runs fifteen thousand words—a dense slab of verbiage far longer than most readers can tolerate, and not only because its clotty style makes even Fielding's clamorous slapstick a bore. Add five thousand words more of interpolated notes thick with analytical patter about underlying themes, metaphors, and "Balance, Symmetry, and the Search for Order in the Universe" in hopes, presumably, that students will regurgitate some of it on cue in the classroom. The student gets better value, however, in those sample exam questions that, the preface promises, will "give [him] an extra edge . . . better grades." They are in the reassuringly familiar three-choice form that, the student is already aware, gives him tolerable odds of two-to-one against.

Here is the crux of the BCM issue: The teacher's purpose in inflicting exams and term papers on the student is to check whether the student has read the assigned stuff. Whatever the BCM industry's motive in supplying him, what the student gets is a crude but effective means of faking compliance without even knowing the color of the book's binding. That is why one needn't question the publishers' claims of millions of student customers. To skim the so-called synopsis gives data enough on major characters and setting; a dry run through the canned questions and answers the evening before the test briefs and refreshes him to the getting-by point. Did Squire Western and Sophia love each other? Justify your opinion. In a seizure of metaphor-malady, page 27 provides an oblique answer: how significant that Sophia, riding with the Squire, falls off her horse into Tom's arms! If the student can spell metaphor, even a vague recollection of that scholarly fantasy gives him a sporting chance—and to a non-academic reader a shuddery glimpse of what classroom discussions may be like these days. What Fielding would certainly have said about that question and the response would be unprintable even now that the community college instructor who did *The Canterbury Tales* for Barron's can describe Absolon of "The Miller's Tale" as "particular about his scent; which could explain why he is squeamish about farting." (By the way, Cliffs and Barron's disagree about how to spell Absolon; neither agrees with my Skeat's complete Chaucer.)

Many such absurdities bore out Barron's claim that BCMs are fun to read. Why so many

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plot coincidences in *Tom Jones*? Why did Swift put so much obscenity into *Gulliver*? Answer those intelligibly. Does love or lust dominate Antony's affair with Cleopatra? Explain your choice. Barron's *Silas Marner* (page 106) rewards the student for getting that far by telling him now to go read the whole Book of Job for comparison with Silas's troubles. The Cliffs *Catcher in the Rye* has a masterful tautology: "Discuss the unity of the novel as a whole." The Cliffs *Merchant of Venice* wants Venice described "as a setting" using the script's "references . . . quotes, allusions, etc." The local color data in the whole five acts consist of one mention of a gondola and three mentions of the Rialto with no indication that it is not just a street. The State-U Ph.D. plus "Cliffs Notes Editorial Staff" doing this one should have been more familiar with their text.

The State-U department of theater chief who did Cliffs' *Macbeth* also wanted bricks made with practically no straw: "Describe the Macbeths' marital relations." Suppose an instructor has borrowed this as, one understands, instructors sometimes do, and one of his smart-alecky students has actually read the play and resents faker-entrapment questions:

> Probably stable to begin with. Macbeth calls his wife "dearest chuck" and the dialogue hints they share a bedroom. Eventual estrangement is plainly hinted, however, when, on hearing "The queen, my lord, is dead," Macbeth doesn't bother to ask what did her in but just takes it as cue for grumbling that it was bound to happen sometime, and what's the use of living anyway? In act I, scene viii, she says she has "given suck" to a "babe," yet in act IV, scene iii, Macduff says "[Macbeth] has no children." Since she probably never acted as wetnurse, was this a child of conjugal intercourse so long dead that she must remind him she was once a mother? Or does she thus give it away that she once bore a bastard to a probably lower-class lover before Macbeth came courting? Was it secretly destroyed to guard her good name? Or cruelly sequestered like the Man in the Iron Mask?
>
> The poor little thing was probably a girl, else why is Lady Macbeth urged to "Bring forth men children only!" If Macbeth now learns for the first time that she proved fertile before marriage, does her present barrenness confirm his suspicion that he is sterile, doomed to lack legitimate heirs? Was that why the witches' insistence that Banquo's line will succeed him upsets him so? Bad enough for the macho Thane of Glamis to lack heirs. But now a crown is involved. If my get can't wear it, neither shall Banquo's!
>
> With a few words here and there Shakespeare could have taken care of all that. He often left gaps. He failed to explain why Macduff took off, leaving his family unprotected, about which his wife complains so understandably, and how Lady Macbeth could hold a lighted candle while mimicking handwashing.

At seventeen-thousand-odd words, *Macbeth* is the Bard's shortest script. Cliffs' treatment of it runs a good twenty-one thousand, Barron's twenty-five thousand, Monarch's forty-three thousand while giving no straight questions and only four suggested essay topics. At that rate, students committed to dodging word-length might save their money and go to the original, which is far easier reading than any of these "synopses" laced with flaccid pedantry.

Cliffs' *Treasure Island*, processed by another State-U M.A., does compress Stevenson's energetic one hundred thousand words into nine thousand pedestrian ones. But that brief space shows twenty instances of faulty word usage or distorted sense that should have cost that M.A. many red-pencil Xs. Some are eerily out of focus: Silver's "wooden leg, his temper, and his shrill-voiced parrot make him almost inhuman." Stevenson is reproached for "never attempting a serious masterpiece." Is the chill, brooding brilliance of *Dr. Jekyll* just a barrel of laughs? What about *Weir of Hermiston*?

The Cliffs version of *Alice in Wonderland* makes one wonder in what field its author, a Visiting Scholar on an Ivy League campus, majored. He misapplies *unfurl* and *mayhem*. Neither Isaac Watts's "busy little bee" nor Jane Taylor's twinkly little star was of Victorian origin. The Mock Turtle's song is not in heroic couplets. His bibliography neglects Martin Gardner's *Annotated Alice*, that triumph of combining scholarship with common sense. (These scholars in the BCM stable also fail to mention such indispensable classic comments as Dryden's "God's plenty" on Chaucer and De Quincey's "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth.") He shields students from seeing *Alice* as buoyantly carefree by calling it "an inexhaustible mine of literary, philosophical and scientific themes: such as "Abandonment/Loneliness . . . Time and

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Space . . . Death . . . symbolized by the White Rabbit's fan."

The flaws in Cliffs' *Billy Budd,* as a State-U Ph.D. works it up, are fewer, but they are as irksome as a stuck eyelash. Billy's farewell to his first ship is unaccountable baby talk: "goody-by." Kaspar Hauser's name is misspelled two ways. "The H.M.S. *Indomitable*" appears three times, so it isn't a typo; wasn't our Ph.D. aware that those initials stand for "His/Her Majesty's Ship," hence to add "the" is bad English? In fourteen thousand words of lame erudition he rings the changes on forty years of critics' mastication of Billy. That doomed young salt is pilloried as an avatar of Adam, of Christ, of Everyman, of a Handsome Sailor persona, of something called the "simple, more universal He," and so on until one expects Balder and Roland of Roncesvalles to weigh in too. Little of it is of any use to the student. He can't conceivably stagger the jargon those fellows swim in; and since the teacher must know that he has never even heard of most of them, he dare not try to parrot such arcane lore.

Neglect of students is even worse in Cliffs' *Old Testament* and *New Testament* as a State-U Ph.D. in philosophy handles them. His *New Testament* gives a mere twelve hundred words on the life of Christ before embarking on twenty thousand, higher-criticism-style, on the epistles, gospels, Acts, and Revelation, in that order. He analyzes the Old Testament in terms of history and ideas. An encyclopedia editor could use this man; his skillful deployment of recondite materials contrasts tactlessly with the clumsy forceps work of other Cliffs' midwives. But it also calls for more familiarity with the originals than today's students usually have. The expert gives students no detailed synopses, no character analyses of Judas and Nebuchadnezzar, no BB-shot questions such as "Did they give Ananias and Sapphira a square shake?" and "Was it Jezebel's heavy makeup that made Jehu drive so fast?" Monarch's dehydration of Holy Writ ruthlessly piles the Apocrypha on top of the canon. Yet all those biblical BCMs often show "SOLD OUT—REORDER" flags in the bookstores' display racks. There must be a lot of divinity students nervous about exams and many Sunday-school teachers needing something to say to the class next Sunday.

BCM publishers must get some protective coloring from such workman-like instances of canned scholarship. A specially generous one is Monarch's *The Waste Land* in which an erudite woman (degree not stated) at a small college supplements Eliot's testy notes with many of the full texts referred to. Where he merely identifies the refrain from Spenser's *Epithalamion,* she prints all of its 191 gorgeous lines. Where glancing bits from Middleton's *Women Beware Women* are merely acknowledged, she gives all 161 lines of the scene involved. Where alien tongues intervene, she sometimes supplies the originals in Latin, French, German, Italian. But she stoops to no term-paper themes and avoids the sub-literate errors that disfigure other BCM work. This could be useful to students in libraries too small to come up with Gérard de Nerval et al. Soon after publication (copyright 1971), discovery of Eliot's pre-compression version undercut much of it. Yet Monarch still sells it, and quite right. Otherwise its customers would be deprived of her explanation for Eliot's tag from Goldsmith ("When lovely woman stoops to folly . . ."): Once upon a time, "a sexual encounter between unmarried adults was considered a serious offense. In that era virginity was a prized state." Yes, Virginia, in antediluvian days there were not only giants but also things undreamed of in your philosophy.

The BCMs' $2.50 to $4.95 price range reflects inflation almost as severe as that of movie tickets. Pre–1960 the need for quick fill-ins as exam time loomed was more simply met by Classics Illustrated (formerly Comic Classics) that provided, at fifteen cents a throw, forty-odd pages of comic-book-style drawings and simplified words covering the gist of the originals. I asked my dentist whether Cliffs had infiltrated his schooling; he said: "No Cliffs back then, but those Classics Illustrated were a big help." A friend of mine still remembers the explosion when her father found her high school brother polluted by the Classics Illustrated version of *Robinson Crusoe.* She said the old man could not have carried on worse had it been pornography.

Of course, Classics Illustrated at fifteen cents each are now collectors' items. They billed themselves as "Thrilling—Exciting—Romantic—Adventure . . . by the World's Greatest Authors." They did supply recogniz-

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able versions of Dumas, Rider Haggard, Jules Verne but also, doubtless with an eye to placating parents intolerant of the comic-book format, such adrenalin-rousing page turners as *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Silas Marner*, while the back matter intoned: "Now that you have read the Classics Illustrated edition, don't miss the added enjoyment of reading the original" and threw in supplementary education in the shape of a grand-opera plot and a one-page biography of a renowned artist, scientist, or writer.

The Classics Illustrated imprint recently upgraded itself into a slick-paper, high-ticket ($3.75) series employing pretentious artwork as well as reminiscences of the comic-book technique. The targets often coincide with BCMs: *Dr. Jekyll*, *Alice*, *Great Expectations*. "Classics Illustrated are not substitutes for the originals." On the same page, however, appears the claim that they offer "accurate representation of the original work . . . true to the intent of the author." In the Classics Illustrated treatment of *Moby Dick*, snippets of disjointed text (they are scattered through the murky illustration swamping the first page) compress into 250 words the 2,700 that Melville seems to have needed if his opening was to be true to his intention. Well, both versions begin: "Call me Ishmael."

Moby Dick, *Silas Marner*, and *Don Quixote* are typical pacesetters among the ninety-odd titles that the three BCMs unanimously choose to celebrate after their fashion. Take that group as the tacit consensus canon of literature in which the teachers in our high schools, community and four-year colleges work. It is also the conglomerate bedrock of the BCM industry probably laid down in several strata. B, C, and M doubtless keep a competitive eye on one another's lists—"our mole over there says they are dropping Dylan Thomas and adding Wollstonecraft"—and study statistics on current reading lists. They can also command advice from individual teachers of whom Barron's lists an ancillary board: three from high schools, one from a community college, five from State U's, one from a private U, three administrators; probably also from the scores of assorted minor academics recruited to process the 550-odd BCMs now on the market in the back reaches of national bookstore chains and many independent booksellers.

How teachers thus abetting BCMs reconcile themselves to youth's blithe abuse of their devoted handiwork is their affair. It may somewhat salve misgivings when they observe that many universities' campus bookstores countenance literary faking just as blithely by selling Cliffs and sometimes Monarch or Barron's too. A few hours on the phone assured me that most of the Ivy League and a random pick of the weightier State U's and Land Granters do so. It was with a slight shock of relief that I heard the universities of Virginia and Chicago say: No, we know about Cliffs and the others but do not stock them. (Feminists, take note: Mills, Sarah Lawrence, Bennington, and those of the Seven Sisters that are independent of the Ivy League also came up clean.) Why does the Higher Learning thus promote sabotage of its intellectual obligations? Does Alma Mater figure that the students will buy BCMs downtown anyway, so she might as well get some share in the profit?

Doggedly the BCM industry goes right on exhorting youth to make only legitimate use of its wares. They are, Cliffs insists, "only a supplementary aid to serious students, freeing them from interminable and distracting note-taking in class . . . helpful in preparing for an examination, eliminating the burden of trying to read the full text under pressure. . . ." A Monarch fan's testimonial purrs that Monarch guides "outline the material and make it so much clearer for me without being a substitute." A "School of the Arts" Ph.D. admires the way they "supplement classroom lectures and help students ask the right questions." It may well be that a (probably small) minority of purchasers, those who believe anything they see in print, or write slowly or illegibly, or those prone to buck-ague about exams do get unimpeachable help from the sort of stuff described above.

According to bookstore personnel questioned, she-students buy BCMs about as often as he-students; and teachers are occasional customers. Knowing the BCM treatment of an assigned text enables one readily to call foul when a jock in the back row hands in a paper with a Freudian view of Lady Macbeth's reluctance to stab Duncan. The few BCMs that are as well handled as the Holy Writ ones can suggest points of view and areas of data of which the teacher was unaware. "Synopses" can be useful before review period. Not all

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multiple-choice questions are too absurd for use in snap quizzes. In one bookstore I asked a clerk for the Cliffs display. She cross-examined me to make sure I meant to buy, not browse for a quick refresher on, *Madame Bovary*; and even then she kept an eye on me.

Most teachers, however, would probably welcome a magic spell obliterating BCMs. No more uneasy suspicions; one veteran stopped taking notice of BCM-addiction in her classes because she preferred not to tempt her kids to go sneaky about them. Another says that, in a straitened economy where even having shoes to go to school in can be a problem, only better-off students can afford BCMs; the worse-off students, she ironically points out, with no choice but to read *The Scarlet Letter*, are likelier than students with weekly allowances to get some of the education that taxpayers finance. A good point—only at that rate the fair thing would be for the schools to make BCMs available for all. If the state board of education would allow it, the teacher might have fun replacing an approved reading list with one including no BCM items to see what kind of riot ensues.

Imbalance may be the worst thing about BCM lists. The proportion of American to exotic titles is barely passable. And what a plethora of Shakespeare! Cliffs does thirty-one of the Bard's thirty-seven; in Barron's, thirteen in a total of 108 titles are Shakespeare. To drop a few of the less-nourishing scripts, say *Two Gentlemen, King John, Henry VIII, Pericles* would leave room for *Volpone, The Beaux' Stratagem, R.U.R., Liliom*. . . . And the whole canon is top-heavy with fiction. Cliffs' 251 titles show 132 novels but only nine Anglophone poets and even fewer examples of originally English prose. Feminists, take note again: Even this skewing toward fiction, where women writers have long been getting better dug in, still skimps them. George Eliot is represented, yes; but the Brontës, Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf are poorly represented; there is only one Wharton, one Cather, one Beauvoir, no Gaskell, no Edgeworth, no Glasgow, no Rebecca West, no George Sand, no Lagerlöf. Mrs. Stowe is there, but with little literary significance, only because *Uncle Tom* has great historic weight.

None of that, however, implies cultural malfeasance among BCM publishers. They are necessarily wax in the hands of the faculties of Private U, State U, Homestead Community College, and Zenith Central High. Subliminally, at least, those trustee-guardians of literature regard it as primarily fiction, only most secondarily plays and poetry, and hardly at all prose-as-such—a medium once so rewardingly employed by Montaigne, Bacon, Milton, Burke, Hazlitt, Holmes, Lincoln—as though furniture should consist overwhelmingly of beds with few chairs and practically no tables.

This tunnel vision is occupational, automatically imposed by Alma Mater's faculty on not only her own curriculum but down the academic social scale to the middle rungs of education. The notorious "publish or perish" tradition forces college-level scholar-teachers of literature to keep rehashing and embroidering in terms that sound professional enough to warrant getting printed. Hence a hundred years' pile-up of exegesis far, far bulkier than the core works on which it is parasitical—those conceded tacitly by incumbent Ph.D.s to be eligible targets, usually because they present the most hooks on which to hang symbols, metaphors, analysis of ambiguities, and amateur-psychiatric notions about the writers' cryptic intentions. Consequently minor academics timidly following suit tend to restrict the subjects of literary lectures, seminars, critical papers, and books to an arbitrary elite of works already smothering under that ready-made babble that the dreary midwives of BCMs struggle to pre-digest for appearance's sake.

This indirect control does not, however, rule out minor attrition that resembles hesitant flexibility. One might call BCM lists at any given time a slightly loose canon. Compare Monarch's 1965 list—343 titles, then longest in the field—with its current 213. That shrinkage dropped seven Shakespeares but ten prose-as-such items, which almost wiped that genre out, and thirteen poets. To name the discards is dismaying: Arnold, Auden, Blake, Browning, Hart Crane, Dryden, Hopkins, Pound, Shelley, Stevens, Tennyson, Thomas, Williams. Dryden? Well, he must have seemed too seventeenth-century topical. Crane and Thomas? Well, they must be fading if undeservedly. But should Keats survive when Shelley does not? Imbalance increasing! And the eighteen additions include no poets, only novels, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Second Sex*.

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Those two last may be indicative not of thoughtful revision but of deference to the university's current hankering to get with it. Since 1965 Monarch has gradually added such trendy things as *Steppenwolf, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, A Separate Peace, Slaughterhouse Five*; for multiculturalism, *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *Native Son*. Cliffs has all those, too, plus *The Color Purple, Black Like Me, Manchild in the Promised Land, To Kill a Mockingbird*. . . .

Today's pressures are bound to thicken that thin edge of the wedge. The consequences are hard to predict, except that as BCMs thus drop titles to make room for a miscellaneous trendiness seeping down from the Almae Matres, the high level of literary quality in their lists—now their only merit—is likely to fall off. That will be no skin off the buyer's nose as long as the new BCMs keep coming in to spare him from reading the originals. Those Ph.D.'s and M.A.' s can be trusted to serve up triple-choice questions about the works of Nadine Gordimer that are just as absurd as those about George Eliot's.

My desk is inches deep in forty-odd paperback samples—roughly 1,200,000 words of inadvertent parody of secondhand scholarship. I shall keep only the three *Macbeths* as souvenirs. The township has an efficient recycling program.

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Recycling Today

DIANA DER-HOVANESSIAN

So this is the day we get back
at the end of our lives
the day we can have again
to relive twenty-four hours?

"Recycling Today" says the banner
on the gate of the University
of Massachusetts, Boston
as I drive north on the Southeast
Expressway past the glittering bay.

Today recycled?
Not a bad one
with its intense sun.
I smile at drivers passing me
who scowl at my pace, not realizing
they frown on recycle day.

"What day will you have back again"
Antranig Zarougian wrote
"on your dying day,
if it were given, if it were given
to relive again?"

"Not my wedding day,"
he answered himself. "Not the day
of the birth of my child.
Not the hour of my greatest success.
But one day from my lost
childhood. Any day."

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Any one day,
when there was such a thing
as childhood.
Before the genocide.

Before the nation
was orphaned. Any day
before we know we are cut down.

And this is the day,
driving, rolling along
not cut down, smiling in the sun.
The day we'll have back.

"Don't choose a special day"
Thornton Wilder advised.
"An ordinary day
will be extraordinary enough."

I will telephone everyone
to tell them the good news.
When all else is lost
we will have this day.

✪ DIANA DER-HOVANESSIAN is the author of three books of poetry, *How to Choose Your Past, About Time*, and *Songs of Bread, Songs of Salt*.

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For Mali

LAURENCE LERNER

Someone has painted leopard patterns in our foxgloves.
Someone when we weren't looking spread a white stain
On the purple skin, and speckled it with peppercorns:
Someone very patient and very stealthy,
Not missing a single one.

I am writing to tell you about our garden,
Since you can no longer see it.

Someone has sent a message to the bees:
Nectar is now available in the sweet peas,
But clematis is finished. His postal service
Is very efficient: all the bees seem to know.
Already they are eyeing the hollyhock, waiting
For its trumpet to open, sending out signals of welcome.

None of this will wait for you. You must make do
With my message.

Someone has put the wild geraniums in clusters,
Set them on thick round leaves, and painted the bunches
Pillar-box red. They are standing round in barrels.

In the white room that has become your world
A milky blindness surrounds you. As it tears open
To a buzzing of bees, somebody takes your hand,
And whispers, "This way, come this way; let me show you
The inside of the foxgloves."

✪ LAURENCE LERNER is the William R. Kenan Professor of English at Vanderbilt University. His most recent book of poems is *Rembrandt's Mirror*, and his work has appeared in such English publications as the *Spectator*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and *Encounter*.

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How I Became a Plagiarist

NOEL PERRIN

One Sunday morning some years ago, the phone rang about nine o'clock. "I'd like to speak to Professor Noel Perrin," said a deep, rather stern male voice.

"You are."

"Good. Tell me, Professor Perrin, do you usually plagiarize when you write for the *New York Times*?"

"What do you mean? Of course not! May I ask why you're asking?" I knew I had a piece in that week's "Travel" section, but I was not aware of any plagiarism in it.

"I take it you haven't seen today's *Times*?"

"No."

"Then I will read you the beginning of your article." And the deep-voiced man, who by now had identified himself as an oceanographer at Woods Hole, began to read me one of the most famous passages in Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*. There was, however, one slight alteration, which made it sound as if I were speaking, not Dana. It was certainly not the lead I had sent in for my piece in the "Travel" section about sailing on a square-rigger. But, except for the alteration, it *was* something I was responsible for. I interrupted him. "I think I know what happened," I said.

"I think I know, too," he said. "You got caught. You were a fool to think you could get away with it."

What *had* happened? Let me begin at the beginning. I had had a chance to be a lecturer on that glorious, that gorgeous, even that historic four-masted barque *Sea Cloud*, the biggest privately owned sailing ship in the world. All I had to do was give a few lectures to the paying passengers, and in return I not only got a free trip, I was even paid a trifle. I had fallen in love with the ship and had been delighted with the crew (those fearless swarmers up 190-foot masts) and with the whole experience. When I got home, I wrote an article about it, which I was able to sell to the *Times*.

Now we come to Dana. When I sent the piece in, I included with it a page torn out of a cheap paperback edition of *Two Years Before the Mast*. This was one of the books I had lectured on to the paying passengers. In my letter to the travel editor I said that the three marked paragraphs on that page were, as far as I knew, the best description of a ship under sail ever written in English. Maybe, I added hopefully, the people who do layout could be persuaded to omit one picture, or just to shrink one a little, and then in the space thus saved to run this Dana passage as a sidebar.

Newspaper editors don't generally answer cover letters, at least not mine; maybe it's a matter of principle, or maybe they're too busy putting out the paper. I didn't even expect a response to my Dana suggestion. I figured the travel editor, for whom I'd done other pieces, would at least take it seriously. His loss if he didn't. Me, I turned to other projects.

The Sunday when the piece was to be printed drew near. I had several phone calls from people at the "Travel" section office who were concerned with one detail or another. Then, about Wednesday of the week before publication, I got a call from someone I hadn't spoken to previously.

"Mr. Perrin," she said, "I've just finished

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the final editing of your piece. I've had to cut it just very slightly. I like to think you won't even notice the cuts."

Both intelligence and niceness sounded in this woman's voice; I liked her at once.

"We're going to press in an hour," she went on. "I see two choices. I can read you the whole piece aloud now. Or you can trust me."

Actually, I nearly always do notice cuts, even tiny ones. I usually notice if an editor changes a comma to a semicolon. I did not see what pleasure it would give me to listen to her read the entire edited piece, knowing that they were about to go to press, and that it was really too late to argue much about whatever changes she'd made. Besides, that voice sounded so reassuringly intelligent.

"I'm going to trust you," I said.

The next thing I knew it was Sunday morning at nine o'clock, and I was talking to the oceanographer. What did I feel? Humiliation, of course. But also growing anger at the editor with the intelligent voice. Plagiarism is something I have always despised. Of course I see that it can sometimes arise from a kind of personal modesty, as when Theodore Dreiser plagiarized one of George Ade's fables in *Sister Carrie*. Dreiser knew he could never write so funny a description of a male flirt, and so he gratefully borrowed Ade's words for maybe half a page. Then he went back to pure Dreiserness.

I also see that plagiarism is endemic in our time—every politician or corporate executive with a speech writer is at least coming near it. Every ghostwritten book *is* plagiarism, by my lights. Even signatures get plagiarized. I used to know a woman, aide to a senator, who would write a letter as if from the senator and then go to the signature machine and sign it as if from him. I liked her a lot, but I wouldn't have cared to do her work.

By ten o'clock I had been to a store, bought a paper, seen how damning the piece looked, and wondered what to do. The only thing I could think of was the obvious one: get the *Times* to print a correction. But I probably couldn't even do that until tomorrow: Who in the "Travel" section would be at the office on Sunday morning?

In that I was mistaken. Around eleven the travel editor called me, full of embarrassment and apology. The man from Woods Hole had spent a busy morning. The editor assured me that they would print a correction in both the daily and the Sunday paper. Though we both knew that corrections seldom catch up with errors, that was good to hear.

He also explained how it happened. They *had* decided to consider my proposal of using the passage from Dana, the one in which he describes the ship *Alert* under full sail in the year 1836. Consequently, it as well as my typescript got fed into the computer. When the woman with the intelligent voice scrolled through, what she saw was that I seemed to have written two pieces: a long first-person account of cruising on a square-rigger called *Sea Cloud* and a short first-person account of sitting on the bowsprit of another ship called *Alert*, gazing up at the sails. So reasonably enough she put them together: first the short one and then the long one. And presumably thinking she was correcting my typo, or my extraordinary lapse of memory, she changed the name *Alert* to *Sea Cloud*.

I suppose this might not happen now, because of faxing. Though it might, too. Not everyone lives with a fax machine. I, as it happens, live twelve miles from the nearest one; I might still have said, "I trust you." I know it couldn't have happened in pre-computer days, because then the editor would have seen the actual physical typescript I sent in, and the actual page torn out of Dana. But there is no use thinking about that.

In the course of the next two weeks I got about thirty letters, which is twenty-six or even thirty more letters than I usually get when I publish something. Mostly they were from people who had seen the piece but missed the corrections. Several nautical types wondered how I could suppose the theft of so famous a passage could go undetected. The dean of a college where I once taught wrote in sorrow, saying he hoped there was some explanation, though he couldn't imagine what it would be. A woman in New Jersey wrote in icy contempt. She made an extended and unflattering comparison between ethics for students and ethics for teachers. That happened to be the year when a young woman in her senior year at Princeton plagiarized on her thesis, got caught, and was expelled.

Now here was I, a professor at Dartmouth, caught stealing Dana. "Isn't it interesting," the woman from New Jersey wrote, "how the Ivy League deals with plagiarism. If you're a

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student, you get thrown out. But if you're a professor, you get published in the *New York Times*." How did I answer her? The same way I did most of the other letters. I sent photocopies of the paper's corrections.

My favorite letter, though, came from an old friend, a man I hadn't seen in a decade. He was not thinking about plagiarism, and he clearly hadn't read Dana lately. Because his was a letter of warm congratulation. He had loved the *Sea Cloud* piece. "The opening paragraphs are the best writing you have ever done," he said. "Frankly, I never guessed you had that kind of power."

That one was harder to answer.

There is a moral to this story, or at least there has been one for me. It is not that one should quit trusting other people. That woman at the *Times* (I'm glad to say I never learned her name) was in fact a very good editor, and the matter of ships' identities excepted, her changes *were* all but invisible. I wish she had puzzled longer over how I could make so large and peculiar a typo, but for the rest she was indeed trustworthy.

The moral for me is that carelessness is almost as great a sin in writers as deceit. Maybe not in some divine judgment of intentions, but in considering results. Sending in the Dana passage was a last-minute thought with me. I carelessly tore the page out and clipped it to my piece, and then I did nothing more. No follow-up of any kind. Like many another journalist, I was already thinking about a new piece. The old I left to fend for itself. I didn't bother to call the *Times* to see if they liked the idea of a Dana box; I didn't bother to listen to the piece read aloud when I could have.

Dana himself was scrupulously careful, as writer and as man. I think he would have been sorry for me, but not very. I think he would have said I brought my trouble on myself. That if you treat your writing in slapdash ways, sooner or later you are going to wind up in a mess. And I know for sure that this is so.

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Prince Mirsky

A History

CHARLES A. MOSER

An aristocrat who commits himself to democracy is fascinating.
—Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed*

That striving to excel and to achieve a goal in order to excel filled his life.
—Tolstoy, "Father Sergius"

One of the most vivid figures in the medieval Russian *Primary Chronicle* is the "accursed" Prince Svyatopolk of Kiev. After the death of his father, Prince Vladimir, in the early eleventh century, Svyatopolk, driven by a lust for power, had his brothers Boris and Gleb brutally murdered, since they had claims to portions of his realm. But still another brother, Yaroslav, properly forewarned, raised an army to defeat him in 1019. As he escaped the field of battle, the chronicler tells us, "a devil came upon him, and his bones were softened, so that he could not ride." More than that, he fled desperately from place to place, insanely convinced that his enemies were pursuing him hotly when in fact they were not. Death soon came to him. "His tomb is in the wilderness even to this day," the chronicler informs us finally, "and an evil odor issues forth from it."

The Svyatopolk-Mirskys, of whom the eminent literary critic and historian Prince Dmitry Petrovich Svyatopolk-Mirsky (1890–1939) was the cultural culmination, traced their lineage back to Prince Svyatopolk. But D. S. Mirsky (as he later came to call himself) had more immediate antecedents almost as distinguished and tragic, if much less evil. In particular, his father, Prince (the Russian title is an aristocratic one, but does not indicate royal blood) Petr Svyatopolk-Mirsky, became minister of the interior in August 1904, during the Russo-Japanese War, when political tensions were increasing that would lead to the explosion of 1905. The elder Svyatopolk-Mirsky, comprehending the depth of the crisis, sought to avert the coming challenge to the established system through the rapid introduction of liberal democratic reforms. But Nicholas II would not accept all the changes that his interior minister thought necessary, and when the ineptitude of the authorities led to the horror of "Bloody Sunday" (January 9, 1905) and the ensuing unrest, Svyatopolk-Mirsky adopted the course of an honorable man and resigned his high position. He left behind the memory of the "political spring," as it came to be known, associated with his name, which he had tried to initiate in the autumn of 1904.

D. S. Mirsky was thus born into a prominent and enlightened family, one that also provided him the decidedly superior education he was capable of absorbing. In his childhood he had an English governess, and grew up with a superb command of both Russian and English—comparable, perhaps, only to Vladimir Nabokov's—which later would stand him in good stead. After studying at a prominent St. Petersburg lycée, in 1908 he entered the Faculty of Oriental Languages at St. Petersburg University, taking a three-year spe-

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cialization in Chinese. After an interval of military service, he returned to St. Petersburg University for work in classical languages and literatures, which he pursued in 1913 and 1914. During these years he by no means neglected his native literature. He participated in seminars conducted by the eminent Russian literary historian Semyon Vengerov, moved at least on the fringes of the "Society of Free Esthetics," connected with the leading Russian Symbolist journal *Apollon*, and published a volume of verse in 1911. The years of Mirsky's education—roughly from 1905 to 1914—saw Russian culture achieve a richness and depth unequalled before or since. But even in such a rarefied context the extraordinary breadth of Mirsky's intellectual interests is striking.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Mirsky was called to military service and sent to the western front, where he was wounded. As time passed, he found himself out of sympathy with the conduct of the war and was disciplined for his opinions. But this by no means meant that he sympathized with the October revolution of 1917 when it arrived. By early 1918 he had left the military and returned to academic life, this time working in history at Kharkov University, in the region from which he came. But the following year he took his stand against the Bolsheviks, joining the White armies of General Denikin. After Denikin's defeat he made his way through Poland and Yugoslavia, and ultimately to Athens, where he joined his family in emigration. Thus began a new period in his life.

From Athens, Mirsky embarked upon a career as critic and historian of Russian literature with a series of five letters (the first dated October 1920) on contemporary Russian literature—including emigré literature—which appeared in the *London Mercury* from 1920 to 1922. These essays—which from the first displayed his characteristic verve and sweep—brought him to the attention of British specialists in Russian literature; and at the invitation of one of them, Maurice Baring, Mirsky moved to London sometime in 1921. The following year, at the initiative of Sir Bernard Pares, founder of Slavic studies in the United Kingdom, Mirsky was appointed Lecturer in Russian Literature at the University of London and became a regular contributor to its scholarly journal the *Slavonic Review*. From this solid academic base Mirsky rapidly developed his reputation, interpreting English and Russian literatures for English and Russian audiences in essays written in flawless English or Russian.

Mirsky was always productive, but he was especially so in the early 1920s. He was most interested in contemporary literary developments, including literature of the emigration, and so commenced his career primarily as a critic who then transformed himself into a literary historian. He reviewed a great many scholarly books and anthologies; he himself compiled anthologies, including an anthology of Russian lyric poetry from Lomonosov to Pasternak that appeared in Paris in 1924; he was in demand as a composer of forewords to other people's books on Russian topics; he translated from Russian to English and vice versa. His bibliography of this period was extensive, and eclectic, in the good sense of that word.

Mirsky's reputation in the English-speaking world, however, rests on his book-length studies of Russian literature written during the first years of the 1920s. One of these studies dealt with Pushkin and has remained a classic work since it first appeared in London and New York in 1926. Mirsky had produced what was in effect a preliminary sketch for the book in an article of 1923 in which he considered a question that still perplexes many Russian specialists at the end of this century: why do most Russian experts on Russian literature consider Pushkin the finest Russian writer, while Western specialists usually rank Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy considerably above him? Mirsky adhered to the Russian viewpoint on this problem. (Like Nabokov, Mirsky disliked Dostoyevsky cordially: "Our organism [today] has grown immune to his poisons," he once wrote, "which we have assimilated and ejected.") And if Mirsky did not succeed in elucidating the question thoroughly, he at least grappled with an exceedingly important cultural distinction—and in the process demonstrated his own affinity to the Pushkinian mind. In all his writings, including his book on Pushkin, Mirsky displays a Pushkinian clarity and balance of style, a commonsense approach that can be extraordinarily attractive.

But Mirsky's reputation as a literary historian rests even more upon his classic history of Russian literature than it does upon his

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study of Pushkin. That work was composed initially in two volumes, in reverse chronological sequence: *Contemporary Russian Literature, 1881–1925*, appeared in 1926 in London and New York, to be followed in 1927 by *A History of Russian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Death of Dostoyevsky (1881)*. In 1949 the American Slavist Francis Whitfield combined and abridged the two volumes; later he did a further abridgment, ending Mirsky's treatment at 1900. In any case, in one of these three variants Mirsky's work has long been the standard history of nineteenth-century Russian literature. Its sections on Russian literature before 1800 are brief and relatively weak; it could not in the nature of things deal with much of twentieth-century literature; but as a treatment of the classical period of Russian literature, it still remains the standard by which all new histories of Russian literature are invariably measured.

Mirsky's *History of Russian Literature* exhibits vast erudition within a small scope. Mirsky displayed uncanny skill at drawing parallels between Russian writers and English, American, European, or classical authors that illuminate features those literary figures share over great spans of time, while simultaneously never losing sight of the historical circumstances within which they all wrote. For example, he comments that the poet Konstantin Balmont (1867–1943) had much in common with Poe and Shelley, "only Balmont is less precise and mathematical than Poe, and infinitely less subtle than Shelley." Mirsky provides his readers with quite sufficient factual information without overloading them and is never hesitant in offering his own judgments: they may sometimes be wrong, but they are almost always stimulating, and often enough profound. Mirsky had definite preferences, but he kept them in check in order to present in lively prose the general consensus of specialists as to the important things in Russian literary history. His critical instincts, too, could be extraordinarily accurate: he had much to do with building up the reputation of the emigré poet Marina Tsvetaeva, and as early as 1928 confidently declared Boris Pasternak to be "the really greatest Russian poet of to-day." Mirsky's rare combination of subtle intelligence, breadth of literary knowledge, sense of history, and critical acumen, along with his enormous industry, enabled him to produce a work that will remain a model for a one-volume history of any national literature into the foreseeable future.

Just as Mirsky attained the zenith of his productivity and prestige, however, his intellectual foundations began to shift. His relations with the Russian cultural emigration had always been uneasy, but in the crucial year of 1926 he aroused a furor among the emigrés with a lecture entitled "Forebodings of Death in Prerevolutionary Literature," where he argued that Russian literature from 1894 to 1917 had exhibited a sense of approaching doom "resembling a physiological foreboding of physical death." In his view, Russian literature of that epoch came to an end with the social cataclysm of the October revolution, and Mirsky openly proclaimed that he had little use for intellectuals who refused to reevaluate their positions after such an upheaval. Mirsky did not endear himself further to the emigration by saying such things as (apropos of emigré literature in 1928): "Freedom is evidently not enough to preserve the vitality of a literature."

Many other factors contributed to Mirsky's gradual conversion. One was the British general strike of 1926, which, he later wrote, made him feel that the "bourgeoisie was *my* enemy" as well as that of the working class. Another was his reading of an outstanding early Soviet novel, Alexander Fadeev's *The Rout (The Nineteen)* of 1927. This short work that describes the defeat of a group of revolutionary partisans during the Russian civil war had a powerful aesthetic and political influence upon Mirsky.

The turning point in Mirsky's adoption of the Marxist worldview—by his own admission in "The Story of a Liberation," first published in 1931 in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*—came during the final months of 1929. In August of that year a British publisher invited him to undertake a study of Lenin, which impelled him to begin his first careful perusal of Lenin's writings. This research coincided with what he later called the "triumphant completion of the first year of the five-year plan" in the USSR, the beginnings of collectivization there, and the apparent collapse of the capitalist financial system in the stock-market crash of October. This was certainly a powerful concatenation of historical circumstances, and at just that point, Mirsky recalled, Lenin "enabled me to see . . . the

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reality of the class struggle, the contradictions of divided society, of the victory of communism, which was already initiated and one day would be complete." Through Lenin as well, Mirsky arrived at an understanding of Marx that had previously eluded him. He felt he had been well and truly liberated.

In his book on Lenin, published in 1931, Mirsky also provided an aesthetic motivation of a sort for his admiration of the maker of the 1917 revolution. Where in 1920 he had dismissed Lenin's writing as "party-jargon," now in 1930, from a new political perspective, he found Lenin's prose "intensely workmanlike," and discovered in the man an "aversion for every kind of loose and slipshod wording," not to speak of "rhetorical ornament." In the end he concluded that Leo Tolstoy's and Lenin's were "the most adequate prose in the language."

Mirsky spent most of 1930 working on *Lenin,* but as the year ran out he evidently wished to take action of some sort. It was then that he began pressing Maxim Gorky—whom he had met in 1928, the same year, incidentally, in which he made his only visit to the United States—on the possibility of his returning to the USSR. In May of 1931, Mirsky joined the Communist party of Great Britain and began working openly for its programs and candidates. Two events of that year within the intellectual sphere seem to have affected him as well: the publication of an English version of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and the attendance at an International Congress on the History of Science and Technology in London of a Soviet delegation, a group whose accomplishments demonstrated the "superiority of scientific thought in the world of socialist construction," as Mirsky phrased it later.

Mirsky's new political enthusiasms placed a strain upon his relationship with Sir Bernard Pares, who had to vouch for him annually to the Home Office. The situation came to a head in 1932. In March of that year Mirsky resigned his position at the University of London; during the summer he obtained Soviet citizenship; and in September he returned to the Soviet Union. He had taken the decisive step in his life.

Even among intellectuals Mirsky was an extraordinarily complex individual, and it is not easy to assign relative weights to the several factors that must have entered into his decision to return to his homeland. One motivation must have been the man's simple energy. In 1931, before his return, he published an article in the *Yale Review* on the contemporary situation in Russia, in which he wrote: "Though none of the proletarian writers' work is on a literary level with the best of Pasternak, Babel, or Mayakovsky, it is evident to all who have a sense of history that the proletarians are the living and the others the dying force." Vitality, energy, commitment to the future—all these things, he believed, were inherently characteristic of communist society.

As an intellectual Mirsky also valued civilization and its works, and now, as he emphasized in a piece published after his return, he had decided that "the task of making civilization has passed to the land of proletarian dictatorship." He himself had accepted communism as an "organized and disciplined force which can save civilization," although he realized it might be difficult for intellectuals generally to assimilate that "unity of purpose and that discipline which exist within communism." And for the intellectual who felt uneasy with armchair theorizing when the world was in a terrible state, Mirsky believed he had found the answer. "The complete harmony between action and understanding which we find in Lenin," he declared in his study of the Bolshevik leader, "is the first announcement of a new age, the age of Socialism, whose main characteristic will be the absolute 'transparency' of its activity to the light of its own understanding."

A man keenly sensitive to aesthetic values, Mirsky was also intellectually honest enough to recognize that contemporary Soviet culture fell short in this area. But from his new Marxist perspective Mirsky had an ingenious explanation of that too. Before the rise of capitalism, characterized by commodity production that of necessity emphasized the cheap at the expense of the beautiful, Mirsky wrote, "Art may have been a true index of a collective civilization as the surplus output of a vital energy that could afford to produce the beautiful in addition to the useful." For the time being it was unrealistic to expect the beautiful from Soviet civilization since it had also to concentrate upon the useful as opposed to the beautiful, but in the future, with the unleashing of the economy's productive forces, it would be possible to anticipate the beautiful once more.

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Overall, it seems likely that Mirsky was most powerfully impelled to return to the USSR by a combination of patriotism and a conviction of historical inevitability. In the preface to his book on Lenin—another apologia of sorts—Mirsky berated his fellow emigrés for refusing to see that, during the civil war, the communists "had preserved the independence of the country from foreign intervention, . . . [as well as preserved] the geographical limits of the Empire, and made of Russia a cultural and political force of universal significance." The communists, he maintained, were more patriotic than the anti-communists, "who had allied themselves with foreign imperialism in return for help against their class enemy." In short, while the communists might be internationalists by conviction, in the short run, Mirsky thought, they had proven themselves better Russians than the Denikins and the Wrangels.

Mirsky was persuaded of the inevitability of communism's victory, and evidently wished to be on the winning side. In a stimulating article of 1946 on James Burnham, George Orwell finds in Burnham's writings symptoms of the intellectuals' disease of power worship, which, Orwell says, "blurs political judgement because it leads, almost unavoidably, to the belief that present trends will continue. Whoever is winning at the moment will always seem to be invincible." Orwell discerned in this the matrix for many of Burnham's political predictions that history had later shown to be far off the mark.

Mirsky suffered from the same defect of historical vision. As the October revolution receded into the background and the emigration seemed doomed to indefinite exile, 1917 began to assume mythic dimensions in Mirsky's mind. Writing in 1928 on the subject of the Russian Symbolists and their responses to the October revolution, Mirsky virtually turned the revolution into a triumph of idealism rather than philosophical materialism. "The most representative symbolists," he argued, "accepted [October] as a Juggernaut, a purifying catastrophe, the well-deserved doom of a too materialistic civilization. By its very destruction of all economical values it made possible the advent of a reign of purely spiritual values." A juggernaut, after all, cannot be resisted; it can only be accepted. That viewpoint informed Mirsky's remark in his book of 1935, *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain*, written after his return, that such words as *Soviet* and *Bolshevik* are "indissolubly bound up with events lying just ahead of Englishmen at home." If Bolshevism would unavoidably prevail, then, Mirsky decided to swim with the current: he became not only a Marxist, but then a communist, and finally a Stalinist of the first water.

Once back in the Soviet Union, Mirsky must have quickly set to work on a book designed to establish his political bona fides: *Intellidzhensia* (1934) (the title is a transliteration into Russian of the English word *intelligentsia*, itself originally a borrowing from Russian), published in London in 1935 as *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain*. At the time of its appearance, Orwell rightly termed it a "terribly malignant but very able book," seeing in it "the archetype of Marxist literary criticism." In fact the book is not so much literary criticism as it is an attempt at a thoroughgoing Marxist class analysis of the British intelligentsia (in it he even speaks of "capitalistic astronomy"). It does include remarks about contemporary British writers with whom Mirsky had been personally acquainted, but as a rule he criticized them on the basis of their publicly stated positions and did not take particular advantage of the personal contacts he had developed in Britain.

Mirsky did not become a wholehearted conformist from the start. He retained his taste for modernist literature and encountered some difficulties with Soviet critics of circumscribed vision by promoting such writers as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, T. S. Eliot, and John Dos Passos, who were then not especially favored within the Soviet Union. Mirsky also wrote extensively on English and American literature more generally during the few active years left to him. But overall he apparently had decided that, if he were to be an adherent of Marxist doctrine, a servant of historical inevitability, an aristocrat who had gone over to the cause of the proletariat, then he should play the role to the hilt. To that end he was even prepared to subordinate his aesthetic ideals to the exigencies of politics. In an article of late 1934, he formulated the question thus:

> The problem of evaluation is criticism's central problem. Any evaluation flows from the basic principles of one's worldview. And since politics occu-

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pies the leading place in our worldview, then any evaluation is for us in the final accounting a political act.

In Soviet society, he argued, there could be no genuine division between aesthetic and journalistic criticism: both do, and should, have a scientific, Marxist foundation.

Mirsky also proved himself adept at stringing Marxist clichés together. An example: "The new stage of socialist construction, the stage of assimilation, of socialist prosperity, of unprecedented cultural elevation of the masses, a stage leading directly to a classless society, makes new demands of all Soviet cultural workers." Such prose is worth quoting only as an illustration of a style that Mirsky would have regarded with unmitigated contempt a mere decade earlier.

In 1934 Mirsky co-authored a chapter of a book, edited by Gorky, celebrating the construction of the White Sea canal, a project that cost the lives of untold numbers of slave laborers and that proved to be an act of consummate Stalinist economic folly. Of course Mirsky also made a number of worthwhile contributions to Soviet Russian culture. He wrote many informative articles on Western and Russian authors; contributed to the *Literary Encyclopedia* of 1935 an extensive article on realism from the Greeks to Gorky; and helped compile Miller's English-Russian dictionary of 1936, which has remained a standard reference work, though Mirsky's name was omitted from the title page following his arrest.

Mirsky must have known it was inadvisable to have contact with foreigners in the Soviet Union during the 1930s. Edmund Wilson, however, succeeded in visiting Mirsky on several occasions during his trip there in 1935. Wilson recalled those meetings in a memoir, published only in 1955, entitled "Comrade Prince." Wilson found Mirsky living in Moscow, in a virtual slum, but at least in a room of his own (this last was a condition that Mirsky had laid down while negotiating to return to the USSR). In the course of their discussions, Wilson reminded Mirsky of a certain past opinion that Mirsky had recently discarded, to which he responded: "Ah, that [the earlier opinion] was *von einem anderen Standpunkt.*" "I admired his way of disposing of this by stepping over into another language" was Wilson's gloss on the matter. And, indeed, Mirsky in effect did speak another language all during his sojourn in the USSR.

Occasionally Mirsky floundered in his attempts to be more orthodox than even the established Marxist critics of that Soviet day. He was compelled, for instance, to withdraw an attack he had mounted on a new novel by Alexander Fadeev, whose work he had so admired earlier. The most acrimonious dispute in which he was involved centered on Pushkin, and took place during the period leading up to the celebration of the centennial of the poet's death in 1937. In 1934 Mirsky published a piece arguing that Pushkin, true to his class origins, had become gradually more conservative as his life approached its end. The Soviet establishment, however, wished to transform Pushkin into a communist culture hero, and so could not permit such an interpretation to stand. In due time, Mirsky had to confess, not only that his interpretation had been totally wrongheaded thanks to his "purely abstract, vulgar-sociological notion of [Pushkin as] 'gentry poet,' " but also that he had been an egotist in claiming that he had recognized his errors on his own initiative, and not as a result of others' criticism.

By 1937 Mirsky's protector Gorky was dead, and the Stalinist purges were in full swing. Mirsky must have realized that he was himself in danger, and perhaps concluded that he could save himself only by pretending to be the most ardent of true believers. An admirer of Mirsky can only feel intense sadness and disgust in reading Mirsky's attack of January 1937 on Georgy Pyatakov, Karl Radek, and other "Trotskyites" then on trial for allegedly plotting the overthrow of the Soviet system and the restoration of capitalism. Mirsky denounced them as heinous traitors who wished to cede the Ukraine to Germany and the Far East to Japan. They could not comprehend, he declared, "how much our people *loves* its fatherland, *loves* Stalin." Such individuals as these should be removed from the face of the earth:

> Our country is cleansing itself of refuse which is completely foreign to it. These poisonous serpents have been caught and will be destroyed.
>
> Our solidly built Stalinist home will be cleansed of them.

In reading such things, one might recall Mirsky's admirable piece of 1929 on Tolstoy,

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in which Mirsky saw Tolstoy's mind as unavoidably dualistic because it was so intensely ethical. To the ethical mind, he said, beyond thesis and antithesis there could be no synthesis—as there was in dialectical materialism—because a single resolution of this type "stands above good and evil," and thus "the ethical point of view is adulterated and ultimately lost." Perhaps Mirsky found here a subtle intellectual justification for his shabby behavior in those terrible times, but if he hoped to save himself thereby, he miscalculated badly.

In early June of 1937 the purge struck him. He was deported to Kolyma, one of the most horrible areas of the Siberian Gulag. We are not certain just how and when his life ended, although a letter published by Wilson at the conclusion of his memoir claims that he died in the hospital at the Magadan camp while "violently insane," most probably in January 1939.

Although Mirsky's reputation always remained high in the West that he had repudiated, in the Soviet Union to which he gave his allegiance he remained an unperson for decades after his death. In recent years, though, that situation has changed. A collection of his articles appeared in the Soviet Union in 1978, to be followed by a book published in France in 1980 containing a biographical essay and a bibliography of his works. Another Soviet collection of his articles came out in 1987, and in 1989 a publisher in the United States brought out a volume of his *Uncollected Writings on Russian Literature,* edited and with a valuable introduction by Gerald Smith.

D. S. Mirsky occupies a unique place in the history of Russian culture. An aristocrat of ancient lineage, extraordinary intellectual endowment, and a thirst for excellence, he dedicated himself to what he saw as the cause of the people embodied in the historical juggernaut of Stalinism, and died pursued, very possibly, by his own private demons. As we know, Mirsky disliked Dostoyevsky. But he also understood him, and perhaps at some level realized that Dostoyevsky had foreseen his own dilemma. "The tragedies of Dostoyevsky," Mirsky wrote in his *History of Russian Literature,* "are irreducible tragedies that cannot be solved or pacified." We might well inscribe some such words on Mirsky's gravestone, if only we knew where in the wilderness he lies buried.

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REAPPRAISAL

The Reputation of André Malraux

RENEE WINEGARTEN

What has happened to the reputation of André Malraux (1901–1976), one of the great legendary figures of the twentieth century? Is he "forgotten," as reputable French critics have been suggesting? Adventurer, novelist, fellow traveler, founder-leader of a special air-force squadron to fight for the Spanish Republic in 1936, Resistance fighter, Gaullist minister of culture, writer on art, embellisher of Paris (to name but a few of his multifarious activities), Malraux lived many lives in one. With his brooding Byronic gaze, his much-vaunted mysterious involvement in anti-colonialist and anti-Fascist adventures, his novels of terrorism and torture and the meaning of revolutionary commitment, he presented a glamorous image, especially for the hard-pressed and vulnerable left-wing sympathizer during the thirties. "Tread softly because you tread on my dreams," his onetime admirers might whisper today, echoing Yeats.

What was the secret of Malraux's hold over his public? It lay in the fact that his own dreams happened to coincide with the private yearnings of many of his readers. In his work and in his self-projection as a writer, dreams of revolutionary action, high deeds of political commitment, and physical courage were united with piercing intelligence. He bodied forth the sedentary intellectual's longing for active heroic devotion to a noble-sounding cause like the salvation of humankind, the scarcely avowed desire of the powerless penman not just for power over words but for power in the world.

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For the intellectual perennially wracked with doubts and obsessed with ambiguities, Malraux conjured the great temptation: the fanatical single-mindedness, ruthlessness, and sense of commanding power displayed by those who are prepared to use inhumane methods of violence and terror, to dirty their hands in order to pursue the secular illusion of redeeming humanity. To employ a favorite word of his, he "metamorphosed" the cruelty of violence into a kind of searing, exalted poetry. Few could resist that temptation, in imagination at least: there, the end justified the means, and the public safety was the supreme law. Hypnotized by Malraux's eloquence, readers were not always aware that the terrorist is frequently a frustrated intellectual who decides to be consistent and who translates dream and concept into action. They were, like Malraux himself, dazzled by the idea of the deed.

Malraux's projected public stance together with his writings represented the culmination of the nineteenth-century Romantic yearning for action as well as thought (conveyed by Chateaubriand and Byron and their numerous followers). Readers could engage, through Malraux's writings, in lofty meditations and discussions on the nature and quality of action, and other related matters of great moment to the fate of humanity (or "Man," to use his vocabulary). There was a time, from the sensational publication of *Les Conquérants* in 1928 to his sudden emergence as commander of the Alsace-Lorraine brigade in 1944, when Malraux never ceased to astonish. Even his position as minister of culture in the government of General de Gaulle would carry with it the fulfillment of a dream of power (however disappointed the novelist might feel at not being offered a more influential political post,

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and however limited his field of action in reality).

Despite the spilling of much ink, in critical studies and biographies, a number of questions remain to be answered. What were Malraux's true origins and background? How did he contrive to impose his imaginative vision or version of events, his personal myth, upon so many apparently intelligent or rational persons? Where does he stand today, in a very different climate from the one in which he flourished?

Even now, surprisingly little is known about the details of Malraux's early life. That is exactly as he wished, and he successfully covered his tracks. His most assiduous biographers offer few clues to his childhood interests and development or to any youthful difficulties. He himself did not want to engage in confessions after the manner of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to allow what he was to call "the pitiful little heap of secrets" to become public property. That phrase would seem to suggest that there were secrets to be hidden. His strange concept of autobiography as "anti-memoirs," where passages from his novels or references to them are juxtaposed with semi-fictional interviews or solemn chats with the great and the powerful—a complex of high points of experience where event and imagination are inextricably joined together—suited this secretiveness and elaborate fancifulness all too well. Naturally, he was far from pleased when his first wife, Clara, chose in her autobiography to shed some light upon his personal life.

The bare facts are these: Malraux's family originally came from the port of Dunkerque (Dunkirk) close to the frontier with Belgium, and among his forebears were modest coopers and ship chandlers. When he was about four years old, his parents separated and were divorced. He was brought up by his mother, his grandmother, and an aunt in a very small and rather dull town outside Paris. This kind of feminine influence (so it is said) does not usually predispose the male to a high opinion of members of the female sex. Malraux expressed admiration for his father, but did not speak of his mother. Women are different but "not inferior," he once observed patronizingly, when pressed.

As a boy he was taunted by the snobs because his grandmother ran a grocer's shop. He was taught unremarkably at the local school, and later he made short-lived desultory attempts to improve his education. No wonder that the great intellectual whose monologues intimidated the cultivated André Gide, and who argued about revolutionary strategy on equal terms with Trotsky, was not keen to expatiate upon his early years. Malraux claimed to loathe his childhood and adolescence. "I had no childhood," he once declared. He did mention his sense of "humiliation," which presupposes a considerable degree of wounded pride. A deep sympathy with the Dostoyevskian insulted and injured would prove a powerful motive force in the elaboration of the theme of fraternity in his writings.

The fact remains that Malraux was largely self-taught through his love of books and paintings and his early acquaintance with avant-garde poets and artists. The intense and eloquent monologues, the impressive and unanswerable interrogations ("What do you think about the apocalypse?" he once suddenly fired at a stunned Arthur Koestler), the kaleidoscopic groupings of the "imaginary museum" of world art, the mind-boggling allusions to world history and the masters of European literature—all these were fashioned by a man whose academic education was limited and who in his youth had never set foot in a university. The daring and the achievement of the restless autodidact are all the more impressive. If anyone inspired Malraux, it was surely the equivocal Danton who, after the victory over the Prussians at Valmy in 1792, urged his compatriots to dare and dare again in order to conquer. Conquest was what Malraux had in mind—the urge to leave a scar on the face of the earth, as one of his adventurers, Perken in *La Voie royale*, expressed it.

Yet if the reader pauses for a moment to consider the range of quotation or reference in Malraux's writings, aside from the studies on art, it is remarkable how often the same names or events recur. As regards the literature of the past, he tends to favor great poets and novelists, such as Victor Hugo (a kindred mythopoetic spirit), Stendhal, Balzac, Dostoyevsky, and usually only one or two of their best-known works, which he probably read in his youth. He never leaves the loftiest peaks of achievement, and it is not to Malraux that one will go to make literary discoveries.

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Where history is concerned, he alludes most frequently to the French Revolution of 1789. Above all, he is attracted to that area of it known as the Convention (1792–95), which Victor Hugo called "perhaps the culminating point of history." In spirit, Malraux is a ruthless Jacobin, with no interest whatsoever in the liberal-minded constitutionalists who made the Revolution in the first place. For him, liberalism (in the broad, classical sense of the term) belongs in the dustbin of history. "The soldiers of Year II" who, under General Jourdan, defeated the Austrians at Fleurus in 1794, reappear with astonishing frequency in his political rhetoric. So does the intransigent young Saint-Just, "the archangel of the Terror" of 1793–94, to whom—significantly—he was especially devoted.

Malraux derived much of his semi-mystical and messianic view of the French Revolution from two nineteenth-century writers who shared notions of an apocalyptic kind in common. One was Jules Michelet, the mighty Romantic nationalist historian. The other was Victor Hugo with his novel on revolutionary ruthlessness and self-sacrifice during the Terror, *Quatre-vingt-treize* (Seventeen ninety-three). For Victor Hugo, "the Revolution is the advent of the People, and basically, the People is Man." Malraux never seems to have queried the visionary concept of the French Revolution he adopted from Michelet and Hugo, a concept that placed France at the forefront of universal human progress. This, for him, was the essential poetic national myth.

One of the most revealing works that Malraux ever produced was an essay of 1954 devoted to that sanguinary revolutionary Saint-Just. (It was published the following year as the preface to a book on his hero by Albert Ollivier.) Consequently, this study of Saint-Just belongs in the period when Malraux was working assiduously for General de Gaulle's return to power. The Revolution, on the eve of General Jourdan's victory at Fleurus, was "a vast domain of make-believe waiting to feel the imprint of a mysterious man of destiny, wrote Malraux. According to him, the enigmatic Saint-Just belongs to legend as well as to history. Anticipating the author himself, Saint-Just hopes to "*change man*" (Malraux's italics) by forcing him into "a transfiguring epic poem." Moreover, the singular young revolutionary has no family but is self-created: does not this remind one of a certain André Malraux?

In the eyes of the former fellow traveler (who did not object to the presence of a Communist commissar to oversee his airmen in Spain), the austere Saint-Just is "passionately totalitarian" in his views, the ancestor of both Communists and Fascists. This curiously revealing remark is made in Malraux's usual manner, as an incontrovertible statement, surprisingly without any hint of condemnation. "The Plutarchian era," declared Malraux oddly, presumably alluding to the eighteenth-century revolutionaries' intoxication with ancient Greece and Rome, "runs from the execution of Mme du Barry, Marie-Antoinette and Mme Roland [all guillotined in 1793] to the liberation of Mme Tallien. The country itself is now sole queen, attended by eloquence and terror." It seems all too likely that this eccentric form of dating was adopted for the sake of the frisson in the second sentence. Malraux went on exaltedly that "the aura of Saint-Just emanates from him alone." That very "aura" (commented Malraux) arises "perhaps" from the flash of the guillotine's blade that put an end to Saint-Just's life. No aura, it will be remarked, is ascribed to the one-time royal mistress, the queen, or the forceful heroine of the Girondins, or the many less-illustrious individuals of both sexes who perished by the guillotine. With his cold passion, Malraux has no time for their anguish.

In this essay, Saint-Just joins Joan of Arc in the author's pantheon acquiring, as it were, the halo of a secular national saint devoted to the Republic as "the supreme value." It was "out of duty" that Saint-Just called for the death sentence to be passed on Louis XVI, we are told, no mention being made of the revolutionary's frigid accusations against all those whom he considered to be enemies of virtue as defined by himself. In seeking to emulate Saint-Just's lapidary Roman observations, such as "Revolutions are not made by half measures," Malraux produces gnomic utterances like "Certain experiences have taught our century that revolutions are *also* revolutionary"—a sentence whose meaning appears quite impenetrable. Fine words barely conceal a sadistic imagination that seeks to turn inhumanity into myth and poetry.

Like many of his French contemporaries, Malraux could not remain unaffected by the nationalism of such powerful masters of prose

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as Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras (founder of Action Française), however much he might react against their proto-Fascist attitudes. Always haunted by death, Malraux took from Barrès the sonorously moving "cult of the dead," which would reverberate in his own later "funeral orations" for the painter Georges Braque, for the partisans of the maquis, and for Jean Moulin, the tortured hero of the French Resistance. It is because Malraux was indebted to the nationalism of Barrès that he and General de Gaulle could find something in common. Moreover, this nationalist element is what makes Malraux's long-standing friendship with the novelist and publicist Pierre Drieu La Rochelle comprehensible. Their friendship endured throughout the Nazi Occupation of France, although Drieu had opted for collaboration with the Germans. And after the racist Drieu committed suicide in 1945, Malraux, the lifelong opponent of racism, declared that his friend had fought and died "for France." As for himself, he remarked—in a phrase particularly embarrassing in the English language, and not exactly to be found every day in French—that he had "married France."

Although Malraux gave notable service to the anti-Fascist cause, he would be denounced (by the extreme Left) as a crypto-Fascist or neo-Fascist. He vigorously denied the charge. "Every man who is both active and a pessimist is or will be a Fascist, unless he has some allegiance behind him," says Manuel in *L'Espoir*. But Manuel was a Communist who eventually sacrificed to efficiency and became ever "less human." Malraux himself declared savagely in 1945, "My allegiance is dynamiting." What really was Malraux's true allegiance? France, the Republic (like his Saint-Just), creativity, his idea of himself? Whatever it was, its foundations do not appear very sound. "I know that I won't be a Fascist because I know what I am and that is enough for me," he told Roger Stéphane in 1945. If his various attempts to stress his own impermeability to Fascism prove to be unsatisfactory, it is because the whole theme is such a gray and convoluted one.

In France, history counts a great deal: it is not at all uncommon to find allusions in newspaper articles to personalities and abstruse events in French history that everyone is supposed to recognize. History was vitally important to Malraux. He once asserted that there had never been "a historical American policy in the European or Roman sense"—evidently a failing in his view. As late as 1973, one of his chief complaints against André Gide, to whom he was indebted, was that the master had no historical sense and had failed to mention in his celebrated *Journal* not only Joan of Arc and Napoleon but Lenin, not only the inevitable "soldiers of Year II" but those of the battle of Verdun. (Actually, anyone who does a little checking will find that Gide did mention both Napoleon and Lenin there.) In short, Gide was accused of not being Malraux, for whom, in any case, history was myth.

Yet if history is myth, it can be fashioned creatively no less than the material of a novel. Both are rooted in a form of aesthetic lie, though the fictional one is acceptable whereas the historical one is not, unless it is sustained by fact and evidence. But how is legend made to pass for truth? That is the mystery. How is it that Malraux, an impoverished young dandy, free-lance dealer in second-hand books, gambler on the stock exchange, writer of absurdist tales, became transformed (or "metamorphosed," again to use his own vocabulary) into the great expert on the outlook and politics of the Orient and especially of China? It was by a breathtaking sleight of hand that deceived those who wanted to be deceived or worse, who did not choose to take the trouble to probe his credentials. Indeed, the same nonsense about some aspects of his life is still being repeated. The whole enterprise must have delighted Malraux's sense of the *farfelu*, or the fantastic and the derisory.

The adventure began when the twenty-two-year-old Malraux set out in 1923 to remove or purloin for sale a few Khmer sculptures from a temple in Cambodia. He was arrested and was only saved from lengthy imprisonment by the efforts of his wife, Clara, who mobilized the leading Parisian literati to intercede in his favor. Disgusted by the injustices of French colonialism in Indochina, not least towards himself, Malraux came into close contact with its opponents, one of whom, Paul Monin, was connected with the Chinese nationalist movement, the Kuomintang. Another was an Annamite intellectual named Hin, consumed with violence, who would provide the inspiration for the Chinese terrorists, Hong in *Les Con-*

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quérants and Tchen in *La Condition humaine*. With Monin, Malraux founded a newspaper called *L'Indochine* (later *L'Indochine enchaînée*), and it was in quest of newsprint that he visited Hong Kong for a few days in 1925. He would later claim to have been a leader of Young Annam, then a political movement that scarcely existed.

That visit to the British colony in 1925 was apparently his sole connection with a predominantly Chinese environment, for it is now believed that he did not set foot on mainland China (and then as a traveler, and certainly not as a "revolutionary" or "agent of propaganda"), until 1931. With *La Tentation de l'Occident* in 1926, in the form of an exchange of letters between a Frenchman and a young Chinese, he expounded the Spenglerian theme of the decline of the West, a refrain that was then all the rage (and, indeed, it is still doing nicely). Malraux's "Chinese" novels, *Les Conquérants*, set in Canton during the general strike of 1925, and *La Condition humaine*, set in Shanghai during the uprising of 1927, convinced readers and writers alike, including no less a personage than Trotsky, that their creator had served as a revolutionary in China.

Malraux did nothing to undeceive them, rather the reverse—witness the publicity blurb of some of his writings. Indeed, vaguely interesting hints about his political activities in China, as conveyed to such distinguished formers of opinion as Edmund Wilson, contrived somehow to confirm his revolutionary involvement in Canton and Shanghai. His encounter with Mao Zedong in Beijing in 1965 (believed to be his sole visit to China since 1931) must have raised an inscrutable smile or two among the Chinese Communist rulers. However, there was better to come. After the second abdication of General de Gaulle and Malraux's withdrawal from the political scene, the author of *Les Conquérants* was invited to Washington to help to brief President Nixon before his important visit to China in 1972. In Washington, Malraux asserted that he had "known" China for forty-five years. There is something so bizarre about the entire Chinese affair: one cannot help suspecting that Malraux himself derived no little secret ironic amusement from it.

Certainly, Malraux did not have to go to China to write novels about it. Many of his fictional revolutionaries are foreigners anyway. Perhaps the inclusion of a real person, the Russian, Mikhail Borodin, who figures in *Les Conquérants* (and whom he said he met later in Moscow) simply added to the imbroglio. Rather it is the veritable need in Malraux to imply personal involvement as a militant that proves fascinating. From an early age he had wanted to be a great writer, and he believed that an interesting biography was essential. It looks, too, as if he were dissatisfied by the plain unembroidered facts of his own existence.

While this dissatisfaction might be perfectly explicable when he was young, it is far less so in his maturity. For he himself became engaged in so many real adventures that he scarcely needed to invent any more. There was the much publicized flight over the Yemen with Corniglion-Molinier in quest of the ruined city of the Queen of Sheba (which he claimed to have found—a claim already disputed by archaeologists at the time). Although he did not know how to fly a plane, he hastened to create an air-force squadron of mercenaries at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and took part in its valorous holding exploits. He chose to serve in the tank corps in 1940. After considerable delay, he played an underground role with the British in the maquis in Corrèze; and later he led the Alsace-Lorraine brigade to victory. In fact, the period of his active commitment, whether in Spain or in the French Resistance, was relatively short. However, while physical courage was not in doubt, mere reality was hardly enough for him until metamorphosed into a death-defying myth.

It comes as no surprise that Malraux was fascinated by the controversial figure of T. E. Lawrence. He claimed to have met the author of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in Paris shortly before that fellow mythomaniac's death in a motorcycle accident in 1935. Significantly, though, Malraux did not expatiate on what should surely have been a momentous conversation. In 1942, Malraux was working on *Le Démon de l'absolu*, his "lost" work on T. E. Lawrence. A single chapter was later to be published as *N'était-ce donc que cela?* (Was that all?). As for Malraux's own literary inventions or improvements, they form part of what might be called the Lawrence of Arabia syndrome. After all, did Malraux (following in the footsteps of Dostoyevsky) undergo a false execution at the hands of the Gestapo? One

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might just as profitably ask whether Lawrence was raped by the Turks at Deraa. These intellectuals and adventurers are Nietzschean self-creators, both of them obsessed with the individual act of killing, both of them blurring the frontiers of reality and myth and, as it were, seeking to force life itself as well as literature to conform to their own dreams and impulsions.

For Malraux, life is "absurd," a notion he propagated before Sartre and Camus who, when young, were both impressed and influenced by him. Malraux, however, belongs with the generation that painfully echoed Nietzsche's tragic cry that God is dead, while still remaining haunted by "the sacred," and perpetually in quest of some form of "transcendence." Unlike many who came after him, writers and readers to whom such words were meaningless, Malraux the agnostic could not abandon a spiritual or metaphysical vocabulary.

He was always looking for some way to solve "the problem of Man" and to overcome the limitations of "the human condition," a potent phrase that he adapted from Pascal. For Pascal, "the condition of men" without the Christian faith is that of human beings condemned to death and deprived of all hope. (That is why the translation of *La Condition humaine* as *Man's Fate* seems so lacking in spiritual resonance.) Yet where Pascal found a path for the freethinker that led out of suffering and death into faith, Malraux could only find its simulacrum by defying death through the pursuit of risk and by proposing that art is a kind of conquest or "anti-destiny." In this way, Malraux kept afloat, buoyed by his own private mythology.

Inevitably, there was a certain strain in upholding his conception of himself, his legend, and his proclaimed trust in the supreme value of creativity and art. Something of this strain was revealed in public by his nervous tics and snorts, which worsened with age. A price had to be paid, too, in the field of truth and testimony. In writing, the great advantage of sweeping generalizations (and of unusual associations of persons, works, and ideas), such as Malraux favored, is that they direct attention to the author's cleverness, browbeat the reader into submission, and dazzle the judgment. Such generalizations do not require anything so mundane as evidence. Moreover, if one is a mythomaniac (or in vulgar parlance, a liar), the habit of valuing the truth becomes secondary. If "reality" does not exist, if all is nothingness, meaningless, derisory, what matters a little embroidery here and there? The very values that are proclaimed to shore up existence, however high-sounding they may be, are really nugatory.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, Malraux could be parsimonious with the truth even if it was put before him. When André Gide returned from the Soviet Union in 1936, determined to publish a devastating exposé of the injustices and the shams he had witnessed there, Malraux advised against publication. Nor did he speak out against the ghastly Bolshevik show trials and purges, the murder of anarchists by Communists during the Spanish Civil War, and the startling Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 (although he is known to have disapproved of it).

Notoriously, Malraux proclaimed that Stalin had lent "dignity" to mankind, and he expressed the specious view that the political show trials did not detract from the "dignity" of Communism any more than the Inquisition detracted from the fundamental dignity of Christianity. But then, Malraux was never as strong on logical argument as on lofty rhetoric. In the same style, even when after 1945 he acrimoniously opposed the Communists who had dominated the Resistance movement and were in quest of power, because (as he averred) he believed them to be loyal to Moscow instead of to France, he still declined to equate the horrors of the gulag with those of the Nazi concentration camps. In spirit, he would always cling to the perverted ideal of those who, like his Saint-Just, set out to "change man" regardless of the human cost. For him (as for so many others), the proclaimed ideal still soared stainless above the crimes of its adherents.

Since Malraux favored the practice of ruthlessness and expediency in the service of whatever cause he espoused, there was no reason why he should dissociate himself from a policy of Stalinist terror. The problem would come to haunt him when the once-bitter anti-colonialist of the Indochina years found himself as Gaullist minister defending government policy in Algeria. Is there something to be said, after all, for the position of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, who maintained that a writer should never lose the freedom to dis-

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sent by becoming a member of a government? In theory, along with Sartre, the intransigent author of *La Condition humaine* should have been siding with the Algerian rebels against the imperialist power. Instead, while in office—and despite repeated appeals—Malraux failed to protest against the torture inflicted upon Algerians by members of the French army, although on occasion he discreetly intervened to save some individuals from the worst excesses of the military. There were times when it proved expedient to fudge the truth.

When it comes to assessing Malraux's writings today, it is clear that they rarely accord with current preoccupations—although that is not necessarily a bad thing. His views on art have long been disputed by leading critics and historians in the field. The notion of art as substitute religion, as a form of immortality, derives in direct line from the Romantic poet, Théophile Gautier, proponent of art for art's sake, with his well-known line: "Le buste survit à la cité" (roughly, sculpture outlives the polity). Nothing could be less fashionable at the present than such aestheticism even if, as in Malraux's case, his "imaginary museum" embraces a wide panorama of world art (including African, Asian, pre-Columbian) rather than purely European or Western objects and artifacts.

Malraux's novels were among the earliest in France to profit from the narrative concentration, short cuts, and rapidity of the cinema. They project not just the absurd and the cruel, but also the heroic nobility that sometimes rises above the violence and redeems the horror. Yet it does not seem exact to speak of Malraux's "humanism," when he himself betrays in his writing such complacency in the ruthlessness and terror that undermine it. Indeed, Father Bockel witnessed the novelist's gratification at the ferocity of his men in the Alsace-Lorraine brigade. There is a constant conflict in Malraux's work between action and the futility of action, between value and pointlessness, between humane grandeur and inhumanity—a conflict that is never resolved.

The stress on man and on male camaraderie is hardly likely to appeal to those who cannot elude the immense change in intellectual climate caused by the influence of feminist insights. Not so long ago, this element would barely have impinged on the consciousness of the reader, who might well have assumed—mistakenly—that "man" meant "human being" regardless of gender. Maybe Malraux's use of the word *man* now adds a period flavor to his fiction. That does not mean the phenomenon of brotherhood in arms has ceased to exist or that it is without significance. Certainly, women do not have a very large part to play in his writings. At best, they are ennobled generically as the ones who mourn or who bring solace to the suffering male, offering a crust to the prisoner or the wounded. Otherwise, woman appears either as erotic object or as a faithless betrayer. Yet it is plain that women were important to Malraux in his own life: his independent first wife, Clara, whom he declined to divorce during the war because she was Jewish, thus causing much anguish to his mistress, the novelist Josette Clotis (who perished in a senseless railway accident); his second wife, Madeleine, his half-brother's widow, from whom he later separated; and the companion of his last years, Louise de Vilmorin, who predeceased him. But elegant or talented women like these do not figure in his work.

In the potent (and even sometimes portentous) discussions in which Malraux's fictional characters are engaged, the reader does not always succeed in distinguishing their individual voices. His personages are to be seen as projections of the author: their problems reflect his own obsessions. This tendency persists in his later recollections and meditations. He does not probe the motives or dubious conduct of "men of destiny" and power such as Mao Zedong: he admires them because he sees them as men of destiny and power. General de Gaulle, Nehru, Picasso—all seem to share the same concerns as Malraux himself.

Sometimes, the effect of his encounters with the great is wildly incongruous. For instance, Malraux could be found trying to convert General de Gaulle to the merits of the ruthless Saint-Just, whom the lofty leader did not view with any particular favor. Malraux informed Claude Mauriac (son of the distinguished Catholic novelist, and private secretary of de Gaulle) that he thought he had convinced the General of Saint-Just's sense of French grandeur. The former fellow traveler also expressed regret that de Gaulle had the forces of the Left arrayed against him. "All

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that would not have happened if I had met him earlier," declared Malraux complacently.

Evidently, the admirer of Saint-Just did not set much store by parliamentary democracy. Like many intellectuals of his generation, whether of the Left or the Right, he shared solid contempt for the often shady goings-on in the Chambre des députés during the thirties, and he never revised his opinion. Moreover, his conception of democracy remained that of Rousseau, Robespierre, and Saint-Just, based on "the general will"—a standpoint qualified by the noted historian, J. L. Talmon, as a form of "totalitarian democracy." Malraux mistook the Rassemblement du Peuple Français (the RPF, a party founded by the Gaullists in 1947) for an insurrectionary movement. "Do you mean by that the seizure of power by violence?" inquired his interlocutor, unable to believe his ears. "Yes," replied Malraux unambiguously. He fully expected that the RPF would bring General de Gaulle to power by force, and he was extremely disappointed to discover that de Gaulle had no such intention and was not aiming to play Robespierre to his Saint-Just.

Malraux's commitment to the cause of violent revolution after the Indochina adventure owed little to Marxism as a doctrine, with which he was barely acquainted (a deficiency noted by Trotsky). He liked to say that proponents of revolution throughout the world were at least as indebted to Victor Hugo's stirring novel *Les Misérables* as to *Das Kapital*. While there may be an element of truth in that perception (since Hugo's novel is assuredly more readable than Marx's treatise), it is certainly true of himself. Doubtless many similar generalizations in Malraux might be regarded as having a particular application to his own outlook rather than a wider significance.

Does that commitment to violent Romantic revolution under the sway of those myth-makers, Hugo and Michelet, now render much of Malraux's fiction outmoded? Have we now heard the last of revolution as a glamorous cause for the alienated intellectual? Malraux's most influential novels were published before the 1939–45 war, and his last work of fiction, *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg*, appeared in 1943. The very theme of revolution with its fascination for the literati is one that has bedeviled the twentieth century. Whether today the radical's scarcely avoidable awareness of the discredit of the Soviet system is merely yet another passing phase among many, or whether the Romantic aura of revolution will be permanently tarnished by that discredit, remains to be seen. There will always be those who, like Malraux, favor violent overthrow in order to try to counter their own nihilism. There will always be those who proclaim that the true revolution has not so far occurred. Malraux's fiction may yet find new admirers.

As for the author himself, the revelation of the contrast between his own self-propagated legend and the truth has inevitably done much harm to his reputation. Nonetheless, Malraux will surely stand as an essential figure for those who seek to grasp the intellectual history of our tormented century. That does not mean doubts about him and his work will be readily dissipated. For it is one thing to suggest that myth plays a large part in our concept of history, and it is quite another deliberately to foster myth and to revel in it in Malraux's hypnotically grandiloquent manner. Experience of our century may not tell us that "revolutions are *also* revolutionary," as he proposed, but it should certainly have taught us that the cultivation of myth is highly dangerous.

Malraux once asked Picasso's widow whether the great Spanish artist had "enjoyed" his legend. Malraux certainly seems to have enjoyed his own. If he has become to some extent its victim, that is his own fault. The cultivation of a personal legend is a way of trying to conquer death, to impose oneself upon posterity—a self-defeating procedure whose utter pointlessness and absurdity must have been only too apparent to him, with his fondness for the *farfelu* or absurd fantasy. In that sense, as he sketched yet another of his fantastic animal doodles, while consumed with boredom in the corridors of power, Malraux had the last hollow laugh.

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A Farewell to Blurbs

JAMES M. PINES

You called me "an authentic voice of exquisite sensibility"
In a very perceptive review,
And saluted my "first class visual imagination,"
Which seemed quite reasonable, too.

I did no less when your book appeared,
After receiving plaudits so fine,
By rendering tributes to that work
As flowery as yours to mine.

I lauded your "marked lyrical ability,"
"Acute sense of form" and "eloquent agility."
We were even in this charade of mutual praising
Until you next noted the "wonderfully pungent phrasing"
Of a "sensitive unpretentious craftsman with tone resonant and spare."
You really shouldn't have done it, though the opinion's one I share.

Then hailing your "essentially right articulateness,"
"A quietness not tepid" and "language of supple fluidity,"
I hoped the obvious hyperbole
Would end all this stupidity.

But no, like an Arab sheik with strangers
Or a hostess on Saturday night,

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You've escalated hospitality
And I don't think it's right.

Citing my "underlying largeness of heart and mind,"
A very sound conclusion,
You've made me seek new compliments
To match your grand effusion.
So I respond once more, but with feelings hardly warm,
That "your sharp intelligence discovers being in the concrete
dialectic of abstract form."

Whatever that may mean, I still ask you to agree
That if I say no more about your poems, you'll do the same for me.
We don't know what our words mean and wouldn't mean them if
we did,
Sales are flat, the critics cool, and there's no one left to kid.

✪ JAMES M. PINES is an international development consultant. The quotes in this poem come from book jackets in his collection.

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Books

Adventures in the Thoreau Trade

WALTER HARDING

It was more than fifty years ago that I first became obsessed with Henry David Thoreau, the author of *Walden* and of "Civil Disobedience." I was a high school student then in a little town south of Boston, Massachusetts, and suddenly and unexpectedly Thoreau was for me the most significant man who had ever lived. Friends often ask why he so fascinated me, and I have never been able to give them an answer that was satisfactory—to me at least. I am sure part of it was my interest in Nature, for I have been an ardent bird-watcher all my life. Part of it, too, was his "marching to a different drummer" theme, for I have always tended to go my own way. Part of it was undoubtedly that I was a native New Englander and Concord always seemed more my home than even my hometown. Without question, a good deal of it was my love for Thoreau's way with words, for, far more than anyone else, he said what needed for me to be said in exactly the way I felt it needed to be said. At any rate, from some combination of these factors—and maybe still others that I am not even aware of—I became, and remain, obsessed by Thoreau.

It is because I am so obsessed that I have become a literary researcher, endeavoring to search out everything I can know about this man who is so fascinating to me. The life of a literary researcher is not generally thought by the proverbial man in the street to be a particularly exciting one. It brings up visions of hours and days and weeks and years spent in dusty archives, damp library cellars, and spider-filled attics, poring over books and papers that no one else has bothered to look at for decades or even centuries. Such hours and days and weeks I have spent in just such places. And there have been times when I have been dirty, dusty, bored, and frustrated. But such times have been comparatively rare. I am not sure that I possess the quality of serendipity in larger portions than most, but I know that most of my searches for Thoreau have been one grand adventure after another, a series of literary detective stories come true that have led me to find out more and more about my hero.

Some years ago the phone rang one day in my office, and it was a well-known rare-book dealer who said he wanted to tell me a story. A young man from Montana had appeared in his store a few days before, wanting to sell a first edition of *Walden* that was autographed "R. W. Emerson from H. D. T." He said he had found it in a thrift shop in a small town in Montana, had paid two dollars for it, and had discovered the autograph only after he got home. The dealer, luckily an honest one, told the young man he didn't have enough money in his store to buy the book but offered to try to sell it for him on commission. Now the dealer wanted me to authenticate the book, if I could, before he attempted to sell it. I agreed to try, and when the book arrived, it was insured for $20,000.

The autograph looked authentic. It was apparently in Thoreau's handwriting; its inscription was typical of those in his presentation copies; and the ink was that peculiar shade of brownish purple that Thoreau's homemade ink often faded into. Yet I was wary. Thoreau's books brought large sums on the mar-

✪ WALTER HARDING, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of American Literature at SUNY-Geneseo, has been the secretary of the Thoreau Society since 1941. He is the author of *The Days of Henry Thoreau*.

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ket, and all of these characteristics could have been forged by someone who really knew his business. I needed some other evidence if I were to clinch the identification. Leafing through the volume, I discovered dozens of penciled annotations in the margins and even more on the back endpapers. They were in neither the handwriting of Emerson nor of Thoreau and, in fact, some of the annotations were dated after the deaths of both men. Yet it was obvious from their content that they had been written by someone who knew Thoreau and Emerson well and had lived in or near Concord in the later years of the nineteenth century. It also seemed likely, particularly from the inscriptions on the endpapers, that whoever had made the notes had been working on some kind of essay or lecture on Thoreau. The mystery was finally solved when I found one of the annotations initialed "E. W. E." Obviously Edward Waldo Emerson—Ralph Waldo Emerson's son, and the member of the family most closely attached to Thoreau. He had spent his entire life in Concord as a family physician, and in 1917 had published a book, *Henry Thoreau as Remembered by a Young Friend*, based on lectures he had been giving for some years. Obviously he had received the book from his father, and all of his annotations (for they proved to be in his handwriting) completely authenticated the book, for no sane person would have attempted to forge all of Edward's notes: he would have been too likely to have given himself away by an anachronism or some other slip.

When I called the dealer, he agreed that the annotations indeed authenticated the book, and added, "Well, that will raise its price considerably." But then he asked, "How do you suppose the book ever got to Montana?" I could only guess that Edward Emerson had given it to a friend or that it perhaps had been sold in the settling of his estate in 1930. At any rate, the book was put up for sale at an antiquarian book fair in Boston and was snapped up immediately by a syndicate of three prominent West Coast book dealers for $27,000. They in turn immediately got in touch with three prominent collectors and said, "Start bidding." It was knocked down at $72,500 and presented anonymously to the Library of Congress.

But the story does not end there. A few days later David Emerson, Edward Waldo Emerson's grandson and nominal head of the Emerson family, announced that the book had been stolen from his sister Ellen's (Mrs. Ellen Emerson Cotton's) ranch in Montana, and asked the courts to impound the book until its ownership could be determined. The young man stuck to his story that he had picked the book up in a thrift shop until Mrs. Cotton produced a guest book in court that included the young man's autograph on a charity tour of her estate. The book was awarded to Mrs. Cotton and, since luckily all the funds had been held in escrow, there were no financial complications. Shortly thereafter Mrs. Cotton donated the volume to the Concord Free Public Library with the stipulation that it always be available for any interested person to see. So the book is now at last back in the hometown of Emerson and Thoreau. What happened to the young man I have never found out.

Another adventure was of a very different kind. The one romance in bachelor Thoreau's life has long fascinated his followers. According to legend both he and his older brother John fell in love with the same girl, Ellen Sewall of Scituate, Massachusetts. John proposed, was accepted, and then a few hours later rejected, Ellen explaining that he had caught her by surprise and that it was really Henry she loved. But when a few months later Henry proposed, Ellen regretfully turned him down too because her father objected to his daughter marrying "any associate of that damned radical Ralph Waldo Emerson"!

In 1958 the great Perry Miller of Harvard University caused a sensation in Thoreau circles by announcing, in his book *Consciousness in Concord*, that he thought the whole story of Ellen a fabrication, pointing out that there was no record of the romance in print until 1890, nearly thirty years after Thoreau's death, and the tale seems to have grown by accretion in modern times. Miller accused more recent biographers of expanding on it to add a little spice to their books.

Shortly after Miller's book was published, he received a letter from a man in New York City who identified himself as a grandson of Ellen Sewall (she had later happily married a Rev. Joseph Osgood) and stated that there was an amplitude of evidence that the Sewall story was fact and not fiction. Since Miller was by then busy working on a book on another

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The 1991 Phi Beta Kappa Book Awards

The Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science

ENVISIONING INFORMATION. *Edward R. Tufte. Graphics Press. $48.*

Citation: Edward R. Tufte's *Envisioning Information* is elegant as well as sensible. It is a book to read for logical delights and artistic insights; it can be skimmed visually or explored in greater depth. As one turns the pages, time upon time one is confronted with images that delight the eye and, more importantly, prod the brain. What a span is here covered! In this respect the book is like a poetry anthology, but it is also a synthesis and exposition. It is slightly unexpected, perhaps even paradoxical, that such an aesthetically skillful exponent of the use of images should also be so marvelously literate. Few persons combine both skills as effectively as Edward R. Tufte does in this book.

The Christian Gauss Award

THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESENT: TOPICS OF THE DAY IN THE VICTORIAN NOVEL. *Richard Altick. Ohio State University Press. $45.*

Citation: Richard Altick, Regent's Professor of English Emeritus at Ohio State University, has in *The Presence of the Present* tried to show how popular culture is an excellent indicator of a society's values and, further, how it influenced the formation of what we now accept as high culture. Subtitled *Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel,* the book uncovers various then-current topics that formed parts of the matrix of Victorian novels. It reveals to what degree the novel was indeed a *popular* type of literature and shows how it cannot be appreciated without some knowledge of the topical events and concerns treated in it. Religious controversy, various amusements and entertainments, crime, modes of dress—practically everything that made up daily life in Victorian England—all these matters are incorporated by a Dickens or a Trollope into their fiction. In examining this, Professor Altick's book provides nothing less than a history of the evolution of the Victorian novel from the Scott romantic and the Bulwer Lytton silver-fork novels of the 1820s and 1830s to the realistic fiction of Dickens and George Eliot a few decades later. *The Presence of the Present* is a monumental achievement.

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Award

IN SEARCH OF HUMAN NATURE: THE DECLINE AND REVIVAL OF DARWINISM IN AMERICAN SOCIAL THOUGHT. *Carl N. Degler. Oxford University Press. $24.95.*

Citation: The theme of Carl N. Degler's *In Search of Human Nature* is that Darwin lives. Thus far, according to Degler, Darwin has lived three lives. In the first, Darwin discovered the concept of nature as a powerful and ever-evolving influence on human thought and behavior in the nineteenth century. In the second, biological arguments are rejected in favor of purely cultural ones during roughly the first half of this century. The third follows the return of biology and the influence of sociobiology and ethology on the social sciences during the past three decades. At every step in the 120-year odyssey of Darwinian thought, Degler reveals the ideological forces at work that weigh for or against the master metaphors of "nature" and "culture." He also shows how one of the greatest minds of the nineteenth century can and indeed should be rehabilitated on the eve of the twenty-first. Degler's book contributes to the self-understanding of modern man by exposing patterns of interpretation that scientists working the field are unlikely to see and by posing scientific questions that intellectual historians are generally loath to ask.

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subject and thought he had had his say on Thoreau, he turned the letter over to me to follow up on since I was already at work on my biography of Thoreau. The New York grandson quickly put me in touch with his cousin, another grandson of Ellen, George Davenport by name, who lived in Los Angeles, California.

Mr. Davenport informed me that he had inherited most of the Sewall-Osgood family papers and, recently retired, he was now engaged in making transcripts of the more important ones for distribution among his cousins. He would add my name to his mailing list. Over the next several years I received from him nearly six hundred pages of transcripts of wills, diaries, and letters. Perhaps only 5 percent, if that much, pertained to the Thoreau-Sewall romance, but that 5 percent did in fact fully document the romance and included even manuscript poems Thoreau had written to Ellen. Mr. Davenport gave me photocopies of all the pertinent manuscripts so that I could check them with my own eyes.

The great surprise, however, came when well along the way he mentioned having just received a letter from his aunt, Louise Koopman. Now if Mr. Davenport was Ellen's grandson, then his aunt must have been Ellen's daughter. Ellen and Thoreau had had their romance in 1840. Thoreau had died in 1862. This was now 1963. Could a daughter of Ellen still be alive? "Yes, indeed," replied Mr. Davenport. "Aunt Louise was Ellen's youngest child and was born in 1863. She was now ninety-nine years old, vigorously alive in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Since she was born the year after Thoreau died, she could obviously not remember him, but she had much to say about her mother's interest in Thoreau."

Needless to say, I was very shortly in touch with Mrs. Koopman. She had just written a little essay on her mother's friendship with Thoreau and was disappointed to have it rejected by the *Atlantic Monthly*—why, when I read it, I could not understand, for it was delightfully written. I very quickly persuaded the *Massachusetts Review* to accept it for the special Thoreau number they were then preparing. Mrs. Koopman was so pleased that she wrote me that she, at the age of ninety-nine, had decided to embark on a new career of writing.

I visited her in her Cambridge apartment, and she was indeed as spry as her nephew had asserted. She lived alone and did all her own cooking and housekeeping. She told me her mother always kept a portrait of Thoreau hanging on the living room wall. (What Mr. Osgood thought of that I did not learn.) Her mother always gathered in every new edition of any of Thoreau's works and any book or article about him. She did add, however, that while her mother had followed her father's command on rejecting Thoreau's proposal of marriage, she indicated that had there been similar objection to Mr. Osgood's later proposal, she would have gone ahead and married him anyway. She also indicated that the long secrecy about the Thoreau-Sewall romance had been deliberate on the family's part—in deference to Mr. Osgood's feelings.

We chatted along at a great rate. After an hour or so, aware that she was ninety-nine, I got up to go, saying I was afraid I might be tiring her. Her reply was, "Nonsense!" and she persuaded me to stay on and on until I had spent nearly three hours with her. A few days later she wrote asking me to come back soon when I was not worried about her health. Unfortunately I never did get back, for she died suddenly and unexpectedly a few months later.

The highlight of my evening with her was when she turned to me and asked, "Have you met my older sister?" I then learned that she had an older sister, Frances Collier of Cohasset, Massachusetts, who was 101. Oddly enough, I had known Mrs. Collier's daughter, Mrs. Gilbert Tower, but who would have thought to ask an eighty-year-old woman if her mother was still alive? I got in touch with Mrs. Tower again almost immediately and was soon invited out to Cohasset to have luncheon with mother and daughter. I was met at the door by Mrs. Tower, who deplored the fact that I had not met her mother earlier. "She was fine until last winter when she had a severe case of influenza, and since then she has had great trouble with her memory," she said. (I learned from another source that up until her illness she had been known as the keenest bridge player in Cohasset.)

Mrs. Collier turned out to be as lively as her sister, but it was true her memory was failing her. She could not remember where she had put her glasses five minutes ago, and she told the same stories over and over again. But if I asked her about things that had happened

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eighty or ninety years ago, she remembered them clearly. The high point of the afternoon came when she asked me if I would like to see her mother Ellen's journal. Mr. Davenport, when he found I was to meet his Aunt Fannie, had alerted me that, while he had inherited most of the family papers, Aunt Fannie had Ellen's journal for 1840–41, the very period of her romance with Thoreau. But, he added, I should not get too excited about it, for at some point in the distant past—most probably at the point when she became engaged to Mr. Osgood—she had scissored out all the references to Thoreau.

Aunt Fannie brought out the journal. It was a little paper-covered school notebook, very similar to the college examination bluebooks of today. When I opened it up, I discovered that Ellen had not scissored out any references to Thoreau but rather had torn out the complete section covering the summer and fall of 1840. That section is apparently gone forever. The Osgood family has searched for it without success for years. I think we can assume that Ellen burned it. In looking over the remaining manuscript, I discovered the entry for January 31, 1841, that Ellen had missed. It had been a cold, snowy day, and she had invited some of her schoolmates (she was only seventeen at the time) over for the afternoon. Somehow the name of Thoreau came up, and she read to them some of the love poems he had written her. Then she added in the journal:

> I wonder if his [that is, Thoreau's] thoughts ever wander back to those times when the hours sped so pleasantly and we were so happy. I think they do. I little thought then that he cared so much as subsequent events have proved.—But to quit this painful theme. . . .

Ellen then changed the subject, never to mention it again. You can imagine the thrill of finding this passage in her own handwriting. Adding to the pleasure of the afternoon, Mrs. Tower brought out a daguerreotype of Ellen taken in about 1840. It had just been discovered in a friend's attic. Scratched and dimmed, it was hardly visible, but fortunately experts at Kodak's Eastman House went to work on it, and the result was a gem to include in my biography. That all of these Sewall materials should come to light at just the point when I was working on my biography, after having been hidden for more than a century, was a fortuity that I had not reckoned with but now reveled in.

Photographs of Thoreau are rare indeed, since he died shortly after photography was invented and before it had become popular. In fact, only five authenticated photographs of him are known to exist—three copies of one pose and two of another, the first set, daguerreotypes made by Benjamin Maxham of Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1856, and the second set, ambrotypes by E. S. Dunshee of New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1861. Of these five copies, two have been missing for many years. It was a great thrill when, in 1968 Theo Brown, of Moline, Illinois, announced that he was giving to the Thoreau Society the Maxham daguerreotype that Thoreau had given to his grandfather in 1856. To commemorate the event I persuaded Robert Bretz, then librarian of Rochester's famed Eastman House photographic museum and a collector of early photographs, to print a booklet reproducing the daguerreotype on his personal Gaudeamus Press in an edition limited to 1,050 copies. They were distributed among members of the Thoreau Society and some of Bretz's friends.

Several years later when Bretz was on a collecting trip in Vermont he visited a dealer who specialized in early daguerreotypes. In conversation Bretz happened to mention the little booklet and showed the dealer a copy. The dealer's wife, looking over their shoulders, suddenly exclaimed, "Why, we have that daguerreotype downstairs!" She retired to the cellar and soon came back with the missing third Maxham daguerreotype of Thoreau in her hand. Where they had picked it up, she had no idea. They were constantly acquiring old daguerreotypes from all sorts of sources, and this one was in a large unassorted group they had picked up over the past year. Thoreau had sent it to an admirer, Calvin Greene, in Michigan in 1856. Greene handed it along to another admirer of Thoreau, Dr. Samuel Arthur Jones of Ann Arbor, Michigan, about the turn of the century. Later a Chicago book dealer acquired it in the settling of Jones's estate. It then disappeared from sight for many years until it turned up in the Vermont dealer's cellar. Where it had been and why it had lost its identity for all those years, no one knows. But the Vermont dealer, recognizing its value, put it up for auction in New

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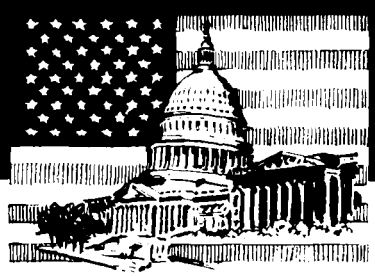

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York City, and it brought two thousand dollars from a Rhode Island dealer—the largest amount ever paid up to that time for a daguerreotype. That dealer, in turn, sold it a few months later for four thousand dollars, and it was then donated anonymously to the National Portrait Gallery in Washington where it is now housed. The other missing portrait was one of the Dunshee ambrotypes. It had been stolen from the Concord Antiquarian Society in 1910, surfaced briefly in 1924 when it was sold at auction in New York City, but has been missing ever since. A few years ago one of the best-known dealers in daguerreotypes offered a reward of ten thousand dollars if anyone could turn it up, but as yet it has failed to come to light.

Whether I am in a library or a bookshop and I spot a book that seems to have the least likelihood of pertaining in any way to Thoreau, I find myself impelled to pick it up and check to see if his name is included in the index. It may be the biography, autobiography, journal, or letters of one of his contemporaries. It may be a historical or political study of the period. It may be a volume of literary criticism or a study of natural history. It is astounding how frequently his name turns up. Over the years I have accumulated more than twelve thousand such references to Thoreau on my bookshelves and in my filing cabinets, and I by no means have them all. They continue to turn up everywhere.

Let me give one such instance. I think it comes as a shock to most people to learn that Thoreau acquired a full set of false teeth when he was only in his early thirties. Somehow Thoreau and false teeth just do not seem to go together. But I was even more surprised myself one day years ago when I was exploring the old secondhand bookstore section on Fourth Avenue in New York City and I came across a battered little pamphlet on Emerson by one Rev. William Hague. Inside it I found this little anecdote:

> It happened, one day, that Mr. Emerson was passing the house of Dr. Robbins, dentist, just as I was leaving it; and, while on the top of the steps, closing the door behind me, he hailed me from the sidewalk with the greeting, "Pray, what have you been doing there?"
>
> "I have been getting a mutilated mouth repaired," was my reply.
>
> "Indeed; have you come to that already? When Thoreau reached that stage of experience, and the operation had been ended, he exclaimed, 'What a pity that I could not have known betimes how much Art outdoes Nature in this kind of outfit for life, so that I might have spoken for such a set to start with!' "

So Thoreau not only wore false teeth, but preferred them to his natural ones!

I would be appalled, I am sure, if I were ever able to total up the number of hours, days, and weeks I have spent in cities, villages, and rural areas around the world exploring bookstores. I simply cannot resist going in when I spot one. Thoreau books are difficult to find, for, as book dealers always remind me, they sell almost as soon as they are placed on the shelves. But I continue searching. I recall once visiting a scruffy little shop in Washington, D.C., and there spotting a copy of Frank Sanborn's *The Personality of Thoreau,* a rare book indeed, for it was issued in a very limited edition more than eighty years ago. To find a copy for sale was extraordinary enough, but to find a copy within my then limited range of pocketbook I thought was impossible. But here was a copy for sale marked two dollars. I was so astonished that without thinking I asked the dealer if the price was right, kicking myself the moment I said it. He reached over, tapped me on the shoulder and pointed to a sign at the top of that particular bookcase, which read "Every book in this section reduced 50%." I handed him a dollar bill before he could change his mind, and while he wrapped up the book for me, he turned and said, "You book collectors don't know what you are doing. You should hunt around places like the Salvation Army where they don't know the values of books. You can pick up books there for a song."

When I began research for my biography of Thoreau, I was astonished to discover that one of the most obvious resources, the Concord newspapers of Thoreau's day, had been almost completely ignored by all previous biographers. It took little effort to learn that there was at least one (and sometimes two or even three) weekly newspapers published in Concord for all but approximately ten years of Thoreau's life, and, what is more, there was an almost complete file of these available in the

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basement of the Concord Free Public Library. Turning through the pages of these old files—or, more precisely, searching through the reels of microfilms of the newspapers—could be a tiresome task. Often several years' files would go by without a thing of interest, then quite unexpectedly something unusual would pop up. As is well known, just after he was graduated from Harvard College in 1837, Thoreau was hired by the Concord School Board to teach in the local Center School. But after two weeks a school committee member, observing Thoreau's teaching, complained that he was not using enough physical discipline. In self-righteous wrath, Thoreau called six of his pupils out at random and feruled them. Then, turning to the committeeman, he said that if he was expected to use physical force, he had now fulfilled the contract, but that was not the way he believed in teaching, and he handed in his resignation.

Scholars for years had been searching for the school committee report on the matter, but it was not with most of the other annual reports in the town offices. Imagine my surprise then to have it turn up printed in the pages of the *Yeoman's Gazette* for April 14, 1838, complaining about an interruption in the fall term "which was occasioned by a change of masters and produced the usual evil attendant on the event."

Scattered through other issues of the *Gazette* were advertisements for the private school Thoreau later established, announcements of and reports of lectures he gave at the local lyceum, and other of his activities. More important, perhaps, there were recorded old town legends that Thoreau was later to incorporate into *Walden* and some of his other works. Altogether, despite its often dull pages, the newspaper accounts provided a vivid picture of contemporary life in Thoreau's hometown.

I have mentioned that the Concord Library's file was nearly complete. Actually only a few issues of the *Gazette* for the spring of 1849 were missing, and fortuitously a clipping from one of those missing issues has turned up in a scrapbook kept by one of Thoreau's sisters. The scrapbook is now in the possession of the late, pioneer Thoreau scholar, Raymond Adams, of the University of North Carolina. Thoreau had written a letter to his friend Horace Greeley describing his life at Walden Pond, and Greeley in turn had published excerpts from the letter in the *New York Tribune* in an editorial urging young writers to follow Thoreau's example. Although there has long been a tradition that Thoreau was pretty much "a prophet without honor in his own country," there were at least some exceptions to that rule, for the clipping reads:

> OUR TOWNSMAN—MR. THOREAU. All the good things which the Tribune says of this gentleman are richly deserved. But the Tribune is mistaken in supposing he still continues this course of life, or that he continued in it four years. Mr. Thoreau lived upon the banks of our beautiful Walden Pond for two years, where he wrote some of the most interesting and instructive lectures we have ever heard, and where he became "as conversant with beans" as any man living, because he cultivated them extensively. He is a gentleman of rare attainments, and now has one or two works in press which all who have heard him lecture are anxious to see.

Thus were *Walden* and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* introduced to his fellow townsmen.

One of the first obligations of any biographer is to read all previous biographies to be certain he is aware of all the basic facts that are available in print. By the time I was ready to start work on my biography there were already more than twenty biographies of Thoreau available, ranging from scholarly studies, such as that by Henry Seidel Canby, to brief pamphlets and children's lives and memoirs by Thoreau's friends. One of the most interesting of these latter was *Henry Thoreau as Remembered by a Young Friend*, written by Ralph Waldo Emerson's son Edward Waldo Emerson, of whom I have already spoken, and who as a child had known Thoreau as an inmate of his father's house, and who in later life spent many years in Concord as a family physician. Edward Emerson's book, hardly more than a pamphlet in length, appeared in 1917 to commemorate the centennial of Thoreau's birth. It is a warmly written, rambling series of anecdotes that portrays a quite different Thoreau from the earlier biographies that tended to overemphasize his coldness and austerity. (Oddly enough, it was the famous eulogy of Thoreau by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edward's father, that more than anything else crystallized the cold, stoic por-

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trait of Thoreau. Ralph Waldo Emerson honestly believed that it was as a stoic that Thoreau had his greatest claim to fame.) Edward, without mentioning his father, said it was a quite different Thoreau he had known as a child. Thoreau, to him, was like a warm, friendly, thoughtful elder brother, who was always ready to lend an ear or join in a game. It was this Thoreau that he portrayed in his booklet.

Knowing how proud the Emerson family understandably was of its heritage and how carefully they preserved all family documents, the late Leo Stoller of Wayne State University remarked to me one day that he wondered if by any chance the family still preserved Edward Emerson's notes for his book, for Stoller said he had an intuitive feeling that they might contain material not included in the booklet. Since I had the good fortune of knowing Raymond and Amelia Emerson, Edward Emerson's son and daughter-in-law, I took the liberty of writing and asking them that question. Mrs. Emerson replied very promptly that I should drop in to see them the next time I was in Concord. A few months later, when I was in town, I phoned, and she asked me to come out to their house on Easterbrook Road. She greeted me at the front door with "I am afraid I have brought you on a wild-goose chase, for I have been able to find no trace of my father-in-law's notes. But do you know who John Shepard Keyes was?" I did indeed, for he was Mrs. Emerson's grandfather, a contemporary and friend of Thoreau, and later one of Abraham Lincoln's guards at Gettysburg. She then said she had inherited her grandfather's diaries and would I care to look at them, for they occasionally mentioned Thoreau? She cautioned that, while the diaries ran from the 1830s to the 1870s, unfortunately about ten years of them—those for the 1840s—were missing (sadly these were some of the most interesting years of Thoreau's life, including those, for example, when he was living at Walden Pond) and that when grandfather mentioned "Henry" he was more frequently referring to his chum Henry Fuller than to Henry Thoreau.

She then led me into their living room where piled beside a comfortable chair was a huge pile of old diaries. Before I could look at them, she asked once again what it was among her father-in-law's papers that I wished to see. When I described what I knew of them in detail, she set off for the attic for one last look for them, leaving me with her grandfather's diaries to look over.

I am sure now that when she placed those diaries beside my chair, she had made sure that the 1839 volume was on top and that she had cracked the volume so that it opened automatically to August 29, 1839, when I picked it up. As all good Thoreauvians know, it was on August 31, 1839, that Henry Thoreau and his brother John set out in their homemade rowboat on the trip that Henry later immortalized in his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. What is much less widely known is that Henry was famous in Concord for the melons he raised in his garden each summer. He raised not only the common watermelons and muskmelons, but all sorts of exotic varieties that few Concordians had ever heard of before. And, what is more, each fall he gave a great "melon party" that was one of the social events of the Concord year, one that all aspired to attend. Here, then, with that background is John Shepard Keyes's entry for August 29:

> Went up to see Henry Thoreau who is about starting on his expedition to the White Mts in his boat. He has all things arranged prime and will have a glorious time if he is fortunate enough to have good weather. He showed me all the minutiae of packing and invited me up there to eat some fine melons in the evening. I spent the rest of the time getting the fellows ready to go to the Thoreau melon spree. We went about 9 and saw a table spread in the very handsomest style with all kinds and qualities of melons and we attacked them furiously and I eat [*sic*] till what with the wine & all I had quite as much as I could carry home.

Quite a different Thoreau from the popular picture of a cold misogynic solitaire.

Searching that and the other volumes, I found much more about Thoreau. Most amusing were those pages telling of a visit to Concord by Ellen Sewall of Scituate, the girl to whom Thoreau once proposed marriage. Keyes was as attracted to her as was Henry Thoreau, but when he tried to corner her for an evening, Prudence Ward, Ellen's aunt who boarded with the Thoreaus and who looked upon Henry as the favored suitor, intervened and broke up Keyes's tête à tête with Ellen, and he was left out in the cold. The Keyes

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diaries were so fascinating in their portrait of Concord life of the mid-nineteenth century that I told Mrs. Emerson that they must be published. When she replied, "No, they can't be," I asked why, and she answered, "No, Grandpa was too much a man with the girls." And so they still remain unpublished, although she was most generous in giving me full access to them and permitting me to use any information I found about Thoreau therein.

Perhaps a half an hour after Mrs. Emerson headed for the attic, she returned with an enormous red cardboard accordion folder of the sort that lawyers used to use. "Is this what you wanted?" she asked as she tossed it into my lap. It was indeed just what I wanted. Apparently sometime in the 1880s or early 1890s Dr. Emerson suddenly realized that many of those who had known Thoreau before his death in 1862 were themselves now dying off. So, to save their memories of Thoreau before they were gone, he began collecting what we would now call "oral histories," jotting down on scraps of paper the words of any Concord old-timers he met in his medical practice or on the streets of the town. The accordion folder was filled with such scraps varying in length from a sentence or two to several pages. Much of the material he had used in his memoir of Thoreau, but still more he had not used—I have no idea why, for some that he had omitted were the most colorful of all.

So, more than one hundred years after Thoreau's death I had luckily come upon a whole series of unpublished, indeed unknown, first-hand reminiscences of him. Typical of them is a tale told to Dr. Emerson by Sam Staples, the Concord tax collector and constable who had once jailed Thoreau overnight for non-payment of taxes—the source of the famous civil disobedience incident in Thoreau's life. Staples owned land adjacent to Emerson's and had hired Thoreau to survey it. In doing so, Thoreau discovered that Emerson's fence intruded several feet onto Staples's land. Thoreau immediately dragged Staples over to Emerson's house and there accused Emerson to his face of posing as an upright citizen, but every year secretly resetting the fence a little farther onto Staples's land, until now he had stolen enough land to "feed a yearling heifer. But Mr. Staples has been too smart for you, and I'm glad to have a hand in exposing you, though it's an awful disappointment to me," said Thoreau. "Emerson," said Staples, "looked as though he had been caught picking pockets at town-meeting." Staples was so embarrassed by Thoreau's tirade that he could do nothing but look at the floor. "Then," adds Staples, "whilst Thoreau was a-raking of him and had just said somethin' darned haa'sh, I just had to look at him, and when I see his eye, I laughed 'til you could a heard it up to the top of the Hill Buryin' Ground. You see, he was just guyin' Mr. Emerson and when he see it, he didn't take it amiss at all. They were the nicest men that ever lived."

There were three packets in the accordion folder: Dr. Emerson's original notes taken down on odds and ends of scrap paper as he interviewed his old Concordians, a typescript of these notes, and a carbon of the typescript. Who had done the typing Mrs. Emerson did not know, but she very generously gave me the carbon for my own use and files. Luckily I asked if I might check the carbon against the original notes, for I soon discovered that a number of the best anecdotes had not been included in the typescript, and so I made copies of them too. Thus, thanks to the Emersons' generosity, I was able to add dozens of lively anecdotes to my biography, and also had enough left over to use in two later books I did on Thoreau. How much more such material still remains unknown in Concord attics, I have no idea. But I do know that I very rarely spend a summer in Concord—and I have spent more than twenty there—that I do not find or have pointed out to me some new letter or diary or will or legal document that is pertinent to the life of Henry Thoreau. And I expect such materials to continue to turn up for years to come.

My search for Thoreau has not ended. Not a day passes by that I am not in pursuit of him in books or papers or libraries or attics. As my old friend Ted Bailey used to say, "I shall never be rid of Henry," and I am sure that I, too, shall never be rid of Henry. Thoreau, in the closing pages of *Walden*, tells of the legendary artist of Kouroo who found meaning in life in his pursuit of the perfect staff. Thoreau has become that staff for me.

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Before the Fall

LANDMARKS (VEKHI). *By Nickolai Berdiaev, et al. Novosti.*

Reviewed by BRIAN HOROWITZ

From July to December 1990, the Soviet journal of culture, *Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, republished in monthly installments a volume of pre-revolutionary essays that has particular significance today. When originally published in 1909, this volume, *Landmarks* (Vekhi), signalled part of the intelligentsia's rejection of revolution in favor of a fledgling democratic tradition and the renewal of its faith in religion. It has now been reissued, with introductory essays by seven contemporary Russian scholars. In addition to its appearance in journal form, the cooperative Soviet publishing house Novosti has simultaneously reissued *Landmarks* in a book edition of five thousand copies. The fact that today's Russian intelligentisia is paying so much attention to *Landmarks* suggests that it has a role to play in the self-definition of Russian intellectuals themselves.

Written by seven non-Marxist philosophers (Nikolai Berdiaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Mikhail Gershenzon, Semen Frank, Bogdan Kistiakovsky, Piotr Struve, and Aleksandr Izgoev), *Landmarks* had as its goal a scathing analysis of the Russian revolutionary mentality following the failure of the revolution of 1905. Despite its polemic purpose, its message transcends the limited, political task assigned to it in that *Landmarks* presents a critique of the intellectual and moral foundations of socialism, materialism, and atheism. The significance of *Landmarks*, then, is at once particularly Russian and quintessentially universal. As an "event" of Russian history, the appearance of *Landmarks* played a crucial role in the pre-revolutionary period by offering a religious alternative to the doctrine of bolshevism. As a philosophical treatise, it raises several critical questions about the intrinsic value of revolution, communism, and rationalism, the last of which, it should be noted, remains one of the basic underpinnings of liberal democracies in the West.

Although one can only speculate about the reasons that *Landmarks* is now being published in Russia, it is reasonable to suppose a political purpose in its wide dissemination. One need only note that Russian literature has always been a powerful instrument for political change, and this politicization of culture has not altered significantly under the Soviets, but, if anything, it has increased. Thus, one could argue that *Landmarks*, which presents an anti-Bolshevik interpretation of Russian culture, is being used as a weapon in the struggle for the "democratization" of Russian history. Such use is not unexpected in a country where for seventy years the past was selectively expunged and rewritten by every change of leadership. Undoubtedly the winners of this contest over history will ultimately determine Russia's political future.

The problem of history for the Western-looking liberal reformers is the apparent lack of precedents for the democratic changes and economic freedoms that most Russians have shown they want. Indeed, glances backward have provoked extreme pessimism about the future. In predicting the fate of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, it is not unusual to hear them mentioned in sequence with the great failures of Russian history: Nikita Khrushchev's 1960 reforms, NEP (the return to private ownership in the early years following the revolution), Aleksandr Kerensky and the provisional government, and Czar Aleksandr II's liberal politics that culminated in the liberation of the serfs in 1861. The fear is that *glasnost*, like its precedents, represents merely another short flash of tolerance and liberalism before the long night of repression sets in. Although all that appears to have changed now that the forces of reform have won out, the putsch of August 1991 serves as a strong reminder that such fears are indeed warranted and actual. If the conservatives have shown their incompetence in practical affairs, they are nonetheless still alive ideologically. The strong hand remains a compelling solution to the emerging problems of unemployment, security, and crime. Moreover, the conservative argument that, having never known a democratic tradition, Russia can only be ruled by a centralized autocracy has an acknowledged popular appeal. To counter such reactionary nostalgia and to establish a basis for the new society that Russia will become, liberal historians are

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returning to the pre–1917 period of Russian culture to find the basis of a democratic history that they feel was aborted by the revolution.

After having been taught for so long that the revolution was historically inevitable, it must be exhilarating to discover that the pre-revolutionary period was chock full of alternatives, each offering a different path for Russia's future. While Constitutional Democrats, Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, and anarchists vied for political prominence, Symbolists and Tolstoyans, in the realm of culture, competed with theosophists and anthroposophists for spiritual supremacy. Indeed, an unbiased study of the pre-revolutionary past destroys for good the teleological view of Russian history that sees the Bolshevik revolution as the final event ending history. Within the pluralist historiography emerging from the demise of the single-party control of history, the liberals are formulating their own view of Russia. Such historians as Viktor Afanasev, for example, espouse a gradualist interpretation of Russian culture, arguing that before the revolution all the indicators said that the nation was on the path toward a democratic, capitalist state, on the model of France or Germany. To prove their point, this group of editors, journalists, writers, and scholars is reviving the monuments of the alternative past, resurrecting previously untouchable émigré and dissident philosophers, religious leaders, politicians, and poets. Such a tendency can be seen in the recovery of the seven writers of *Landmarks*, all of whom were more or less "forgotten" in their homeland. The personal biographies of these writers are typical for the time: four of the seven were forced into exile by Lenin in 1922. Of the other three, Piotr Struve emigrated to Europe after the defeat of the White Army; Bogdan Kistiakovsky died in Kiev in 1920, and M. O. Gershenzon remained in Soviet Russia, despite his intransigent antagonism to Communism.

The re-edition of *Landmarks* is part of this re-evaluation of the other, democratic Russia, but it is also a reminder of the gravity of the present situation. Despite the many differences between 1909 and 1991, both periods share one fundamental aspect: Russia is at a crossroads, the choices made now will influence its fate for the coming century. I. Rodnianskaia underscored the historical similarities in her article "The Untying of the Gordian Knot" (1990), which accompanies the publication of Sergei Bulgakov's 1909 essay. She writes: "There is nothing more simple than to find in Bulgakov's essay parallels with our present. When we read, 'If the Russian society is still alive and life-supporting, if it conceals in itself the seeds of the future, then this capacity for life must be revealed most of all in its ability to learn from history.'" In truth, the parallels are uncanny. We find, for example, the bankruptcy of the old regime (in this case the Communist party), the emergence of an institutional framework for the creation of a democratic government, the flourishing of political parties, the development of an educated, urban middle class, and a rise in the interest in the church and in religious issues generally. It is, then, not by chance that the Russian intelligentsia of today has stumbled onto *Landmarks*, for the volume counsels edification from the study of history; the volume's aim, after all, was to provoke a change of mentality by drawing conclusions from the revolution of 1905. At the same time, in its negative critique of communism, *Landmarks* appeals to a very contemporary urge to censure the ideology that has brought Russia so much ruin.

Although not all the writers of *Landmarks* shared the same views, they did agree on two basic points: the superiority of spiritual life over public life and the primacy of absolute truth over relative truths. The intelligentsia of Russia, they argued, had subordinated their personal lives to the revolutionary cause, and yet their sacrifice had brought little result, either for themselves or for the state. Why? The problem, they discerned, was that the intellectual foundations, the premises of the revolutionary mentality, were noxious, iniquitous, and mangled. The basic amoralism of the intelligentsia, the subordination of all personal interests and absolute values to that of making the revolution led inexorably to several tragic consequences.

In terms of the state, the nihilistic attitude toward truth had led to immorality: if the "eschatological" ends justify the means, respect for personal life and property no longer had force, while crime and lawlessness were condoned if committed in the name of the revolution. In turn, ardent idealism prevented the development of a state based on constitu-

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tional law and legal rights, because, the revolutionaries argued, laws are a form of external coercion. Such ethical maximalism demanded nothing less than a state without laws, which in the end left empty their true commitment to individual rights. Moreover, the revolutionary mentality had rent the social fabric; natural relations between members of families and social classes had lost all meaning. A new system of relations, that of the revolutionary morality in which all concerns were directed to the political cause, replaced those values that had previously held society together. Finally, "the autonomy of individual disciplines" was ignored and absolutes, such as good and evil, truth and beauty, were rejected because they could not be "changed and twisted to fit the task of the day," to use the historian Marc Raeff 's eloquent formulation.

For the individual the consequences were more drastic. The individual, stymied by the imposing ideology of self-denial, was never given the chance to develop his own interests. The maximalism of the revolutionary intelligentsia and its all-or-nothing attitude toward life led to a mentality of sacrifice in which young people gladly laid down their lives for the cause. The revolutionaries resembled "death-driven" extremists caring little or nothing for the value of life. Instead of the normal growth of the individual as a morally conscious, self-reflexive entity, the revolutionary mentality created a contradictory character type whose relentless demands on himself were only equaled by his imperative that others follow suit. Worst of all was the Russian form of revolutionary activity. Although its mock-religious, pseudo-holy rites and rituals resembled those of the church, admittedly forming a kind of self-contained religion, the faith in revolution was sacrilegious because it is based on moral nihilism; that is, in actuality the revolutionary negates the value of the individuals to whom he has dedicated his life. Semen Frank, the religious philosopher, explains in his *Landmarks* article, "The Ethics of Nihilism":

> Theoretically at the basis of the Socialist belief lies the same utilitarian altruism—the striving for the good of the other. But the abstract ideal of absolute happiness in the far future kills the concrete moral relation of man to man, the live feeling of love for the other, for one's contemporaries and their current needs. A Socialist is not an altruist. It is true that he strives for the happiness of humanity, but he does not love live men, but only his idea—exactly the idea of world happiness. Sacrificing himself for this idea, he does not hesitate in sacrificing other people as well. In his contemporaries he sees, on the one hand, merely the victims of the evil of the world which he dreams of eliminating. On the other hand—those culpable for this evil. The former he pities, but he cannot help them directly, since his activity must benefit their distant descendants. Therefore, in his relation to them there is no real effect. The latter he hates, and in the struggle with them he sees the immediate task of his activity and the fundamental means for the realization of his ideal. This feeling of hate for the enemies of the people forms the concrete and active psychological basis of his life.

Semen Frank's insight into the Bolshevik ideology touches an important point concerning its rejection of humanism. Without an absolute idea of morality, without absolute respect for human life here and now, millions can and are apt to be sacrificed in the quest for the illusory goal of eternal happiness and the perfect society.

In its theoretical foundations, the authors of *Landmarks* argued that socialism too was especially harmful because it concerned itself only with the division of existing wealth, ignoring the productive side of economic development. Socialism, they claimed, has no plan for inventing new ways of creating more and more wealth but thinks only about expropriation and sharing—ideas that tend to restrain economic productivity. In addition, materialism and materialist culture in general—that is, our Western bourgeois society—also comes in for savage criticism. These cultural models also provide no solutions to the essential problem of man because they are founded on the optimistic idea of progress. And yet this philosophy of progress is founded on a contradiction. If one rejects providence and an ultimate religious purpose of history, then one is forced to believe that the world is essentially chaotic and unpredictable. Progress is therefore not inevitable or even probable. Rather, philosophically speaking, we live in a orderless universe in which chance randomly and unconcernedly decides our fate. In "The Ethics of Nihilism," Semen Frank argues:

> If the world is chaos and is defined only by blind material forces, then how can one hope that the

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development of history will inevitably lead to the kingdom of reason and the creation of a paradise on earth. How reasonable is this 'state within a state,' the subjugating strength of reason amidst the elements of blindness and irrationality, the serene paradise of human happiness amidst the all-powerful chaotic collision of cosmic forces which care little for man, his goals and his pains and joys?

The reprinting of *Landmarks*, then, raises doubts not only about socialism and Russia, but also about modern political culture in general. Already in 1909 these writers felt the spiritual malaise that would eventually lead to the exaggerated moral relativism of post-modernism and the dissatisfaction with atheistic materialism characteristic of both capitalist and formerly socialist societies. Even in our time *Landmarks* raises issues that still command our attention. Marc Raeff, the contemporary American historian of Russian civilization, hails the work for its immense insight, noting that the critique launched by the volume has yet to be satisfactorily understood. Raeff writes in an article on the Russian philosopher George Florovsky, published in the *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* (1990):

Nor did 1917 end the discussion started in 1909, for the basic questions raised by the participants of *Landmarks* were still awaiting an answer. For, in truth, *Landmarks* cast a critical eye not only at the history and traditions of the Russian intelligentsia, but at the basic nature of modern Western civilization itself.

In their attacks, the writers of *Landmarks* implicitly suggest an alternative worldview. Although the positive programs offered are less compelling than their critical insights, the authors advised a turn toward spiritual concerns, religious introspection, and self-reflection. The intelligentsia was implored to make a distinction between enforced equality and justice, which diminishes the individual and everyone else to one common level, and the primacy of freedom and creativity. In addition, the writers openly confessed their faith in moral absolutes, in God, and in the creative potential of the human spirit. Thus, their program, if one can call their sketchy suggestions a program, was founded on education and a belief in the gradual but inexorable intellectual and moral perfection of the individual and—in turn, through each individual—of society as a whole.

Part of the mystique of *Landmarks* is connected with the sensational scandal associated with its name. It was the main "intellectual event" of the pre-revolutionary epoch, exhausting five editions immediately, and its ideas were disseminated in more than two hundred newspaper and journal reviews during the first year alone following its publication. The reception of *Landmarks* in the Russian press of the time was rabidly critical. The volume elicited anger, derision, and abuse, but little real discussion. This can be explained by its tampering with the unspoken taboo of the time that forbade criticism of the revolutionary intelligentsia; the revolutionaries were seen as sacrosanct and untouchable, given their self-sacrifice and extreme asceticism. Because of their heretical deviation, the writers of *Landmarks* were unanimously condemned as "arch-conservatives," "obscurantists," and "reactionaries." The book's fate in Soviet criticism has been anything but auspicious as well. *Landmarks* has always been denounced as "anti-progressive" and "counter-revolutionary." Its unhappy fate was sealed long ago when it had the honor to be castigated by Lenin as an "encyclopedia of liberal betrayal."

One wonders, however, if the republishing of *Landmarks* will have any real effect in Russia. There are many psychological factors that will impede a complete change of mentality, and political entropy is not the only obstacle. One can scarcely imagine how difficult it is to relinquish all the values that for decades have given order and meaning to life; and, by the same token, it must be equally distressing to realize that the personal sacrifices of so many millions were essentially unjustifiable and unnecessary. Thus, the door to self-deception remains open. It is obviously more soothing to blame single individuals for the failures of history, while sparing some of the basic ideals of socialism. We see this conservative motivation currently in the attempt to forestall the establishment of a truly free market, one that would openly permit wide disparities in wealth. By publishing *Landmarks*, it would appear that one part of the intelligentsia at least has decided to look squarely at the Communist past without self-pity or sentimentalism; but this quick conclusion does not hold up under closer examination.

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In truth, the seven writers who contributed to the 1990 publication of *Landmarks* remain ambivalent about rejecting all the ideological foundations of Marxism. For example, in his article, "The Ethics of Anti-Nihilism," the contemporary Russian critic Aleksandr Kazakov resolutely condemns bolshevism, yet he hesitates to attack the core of communism. He prefers instead to rescue the good idea of communism from its bad relative bolshevism. Kazakov writes: "Strictly speaking, 'Bolshevism' is not the same as Communism. Bolshevism is not a system, was not one and will never be one; . . . Communism is not murky, but clear, it is not only a mood, but a will; it has a plan and it knows well what it wants, it does not at all remain silent about its aims."

Even more illuminating in trying to gauge the effect that *Landmarks* will have on Russian culture are the other articles by contemporary scholars. Strangely, the general perspective of these critics is narrowly scholastic; these Russian writers (who, I should add, are for the most part liberals) treat the volume as a document whose importance is limited to its historical role. While providing full biographies of the writers of *Landmarks*, they largely ignore the work's intellectual value as part of a continuing dialogue about the present and the future of Russia and the West. The articles are full of factual detail, but they are weak on insight and philosophical speculation. Moreover, except for the sparse examples brought forth here, no interest is shown in the question of why *Landmarks* is being republished now. Perhaps the relationship between the present and the pre-revolutionary past is self-evident to these critics and does not warrant explanation. But perhaps their silence is not intentional; might it not be the result of the Soviet system of education, which has for so long trained its scholars to occupy themselves with endless details, to comb the fine print in order to dampen their philosophical curiosity?

Given the ambivalence and uncertainty toward the values of the past, one can see that the effect of *Landmarks* may have to be gradual and cumulative. The volume's purpose, then, lies in providing an intellectual model of deep speculative thinking that will help foster a new class of intellectuals who will not hide from the truth but meet it face to face. In this way, the significance of the volume is not attached to any of its single ideas but to its general introspective questioning of the suppositions of science, philosophy, history, and life in the broadest sense. At the present moment in Russian history when individuals are groping for new ideas to guide them through the uncertainties of the future, it is perhaps the posing of questions about history provoked in part from this volume that can have the greatest effect on the transformation of Soviet Russia into a liberal democratic and pluralist society.

Jazz and Literature

BOY MEETS HORN. *By Rex Stewart, edited by Claire P. Gordon. University of Michigan Press. $22.95.*

Reviewed by JOHN BOSTWICK

Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis met at Oxford in 1941. They were later to distinguish themselves as writers of the first rank, but what brought them together as undergraduates was not so much literature as it was jazz. In fact, they regarded jazz as a kind of literature, and it became an object of their heedless enthusiasm and serious analysis. In the autobiographical introduction to his novel *Jill*, Larkin writes that the clarinetist Pee Wee Russell "was, *mutatis mutandis*, our Swinburne and our Byron." It is impossible to imagine a modern writer, even a writer of genre fiction, eliciting this kind of response from Larkin and Amis. But over much of this century, there has been something about jazz that has attracted a considerable number of good writers.

The cornetist Rex Stewart, who played for Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington, was an accomplished musician who had a love of literature. Though he was always a reader, Stewart began writing only late in his life. He published about twenty magazine articles, mostly profiles of his fellow jazz musicians. These profiles were collected posthumously

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under the title *Jazz Masters of the Thirties* (1972), which is a kind of modest jazz analogue to *Lives of the Poets*. Given Stewart's lack of formal education and actual time spent writing, *Jazz Masters* is, as they say, a remarkable achievement. Martin Williams points out in his foreword that the book is "the only published jazz history written by a musician that is not directly autobiographical," which in itself should go some way to convincing us that Stewart is a writer worth looking into.

Before Stewart's death in 1967, he worked on ten chapters of his memoirs with Claire P. Gordon, who had collaborated with him on his published articles. In his will, Stewart left Miss Gordon his writings, many of which were autobiographical fragments written, she tells us, "on many legal pads, plus scraps of paper, scribbled notes on envelopes and so on." Miss Gordon eventually consolidated and edited Stewart's autobiographical writings to form *Boy Meets Horn*. She assures us that the book contains "only about 500 words . . . not written by Rex." So even if it is a bit of a hodgepodge, *Boy Meets Horn* is still a *book*, as opposed to an "as told to" book or an extended interview.

Rex Stewart was born in Philadelphia in 1907 and grew up in Washington, D.C. He came from a family that was musical and, perhaps surprisingly, bookish. His maternal grandmother was a published poet, and Stewart's own mother had been a French major at Bryn Mawr, something that, he reminds us, was "an unheard-of undertaking for a negro girl at the turn of the century." Stewart himself began reading at age four and later described himself as a precocious child. Growing up in Georgetown, he eagerly listened to his grandmother reading poetry, was "entranced by the family Bible," and "pored over anything [he] could get [his] hands on." But despite his early interest in literature and family pressure to become educated, he dropped out of school at age fourteen in favor of a career in music.

Stewart began his musical career playing cornet in vaudeville-like revues, an experience that had a lasting effect on his idea of entertainment. (In his recently published memoirs, Kingsley Amis describes seeing Stewart perform in the late fifties: "tap-dancing as he played, bursting into song, shouting mildly lewd remarks and making animal and other noises with his trumpet.") By 1925 he was working with Elmer Snowden, and a year later, at age nineteen, he filled Louis Armstrong's chair in Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. A combination of pressure from replacing Armstrong and some sinister raillery from the trombonist Big Charlie Green drove Stewart out of Henderson's band. It was arranged that he should go on playing with Fletcher's brother Horace, in Horace's relatively small-time band known as the Collegians. Stewart was enrolled at Wilberforce College while he played with Horace, though none of the "Collegians" attended class with any regularity. He eventually went back to Fletcher and later played with McKinney's Cotton Pickers and with Luis Russell. Stewart also led his own band before joining Duke Ellington's orchestra in 1934.

Stewart stayed with Ellington for more than a decade. These years were, of course, Stewart's most important musically. It was with Ellington that he developed his famous half-valve technique, and in 1938 he recorded "Boy Meets Horn." It is appropriate here to note that Stewart remained an avid reader. Even during the Ellington orchestra's legendarily crazed period of productivity in the early 1940s, Stewart's interests were divided between literature and music. In fact, when he describes a typical day for Ellington's Blanton-Webster band, he shows himself on the bandstand, "reading, oblivious to everything." He left Ellington in 1947, and *Boy Meets Horn* covers Stewart's life through roughly this period (he had intended to write a sequel).

Stewart's reminiscences are historically valuable, even if they are often cloudy or gratuitous in light of his previous collection. Regrettably, we cannot strictly call *Boy Meets Horn* a good book. If *Jazz Masters* is somewhat uneven, *Boy Meets Horn* is furiously so. Stewart can wander, devoting, for example, two unilluminating pages to a youth-league football game. His style is uncertain, and he is often torn between using elegant, even archaic, language and slang language, sometimes in the same sentence ("But, alas, most of this went down the drain"). Had Stewart lived longer, he would have cleared up many of the more obvious technical problems in the book. But he lacked that control over language which would have come only with a good deal

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more writing and formal education. While he did have opportunities to become formally educated (recall his time spent at Wilberforce), he saw early that blacks were not rewarded for erudition. As a fourteen-year-old musician, for instance, he was making more money than his college-educated mother. One illiterate white man spoke for a society when he warned the young Stewart, "I just don' lak smaht niggers."

Stewart would have been reluctant to own that his harsh environment had somehow prevented him from becoming a better writer. His experience in music (at least through about 1948) proved that an artist who is forced to communicate with a skeptical audience must produce something understandable and pleasing if he is to survive. Philip Larkin, in the introduction to his classic *All What Jazz*, writes that "the two tensions from which art springs . . . are the tension between the artist and his material, and between the artist and his audience, and that in the last seventy-five years or so the second of these has slackened or even perished." By the 1950s, Stewart saw that, in jazz, the tension between artist and audience had transformed, or was in danger of transforming, into a kind of vanity-sodden acceptance of almost anything with artistic pretensions. Stewart echoes Larkin when he writes, "It seems such a pity that music should be forced to pay the price of extinction as an art form merely to justify one's open-mindedness." Stewart worried that politics, even liberal politics, had corrupted jazz.

Larkin writes that "the tension between artist and audience in jazz slackened when the Negro stopped wanting to entertain the white man." He seems off the mark here. For those American blacks performing before World War II, music was not primarily a means of "wanting" to entertain whites, but a means of leveling themselves with whites. Stewart writes that "music was a catalyst for 90 per cent of the breaking down of the social barriers." Stewart was allowed, one might say encouraged, to play his cornet, and he used his music as a form of communication. When he said something with his horn, much of white society was willing to listen, or at least willing to let him play (though he sometimes felt the need to do a bit of "Tomming" lest he should come off as too aggressive). As we have seen, writing was another matter. Larkin himself said that a young writer needs encouragement, and where apart from those in his family, was Stewart to get anything but discouragement?

No one can consciously create an environment that will produce lasting art. Still, *Boy Meets Horn* should be seen as yet another warning that a politically charged environment is anathema to a young artist. On every page there is shameful evidence that a natural writer has been stifled by a "keep 'em down" mentality. At one point near the end of the book Stewart tells us, in a horrifyingly offhand way, that he had to go to France to have "the feeling of being accepted as an artist, a gentleman and a member of the human race." It is significant that late in his life Stewart wrote, "I do not consider myself a writer." But he was a writer, and his writing, if often unpolished, is always restrained and responsible. He never confuses drama with sordid details, and his book contains none of the stale, dehumanizing sex and violence that lie on the pages of many jazz autobiographies. That Stewart wrote at all, let alone with such high quality, is remarkable. But had he lived in an environment filled with less racial tension, and more of the natural and healthy tensions that arise between artists with integrity and audiences with standards, Stewart might have taken up writing at an early age, and his autobiography might have been an unqualified success.

Life into Art

JEAN RHYS: LIFE AND WORK. *By Carole Angier. Little, Brown. $35.*

Reviewed by EVELYN TOYNTON

"Oh Peggy," wrote Jean Rhys to a friend in 1941, "I can't bear much more of my hideous life. It revolts me quite simply." It is a constant refrain in what meager correspondence she had. This woman who died at the age of eighty-eight—thirty-eight years after that letter was written—was perpetually contemplat-

✪ EVELYN TOYNTON's reviews have appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Washington Post Book World*, and other publications.

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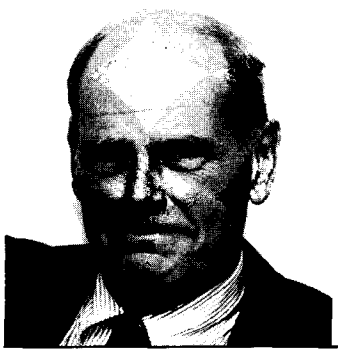

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ing suicide (not to mention apologizing wryly for still being alive), moaning about the wretchedness of her existence, and predicting her imminent demise.

Nor can we exactly blame her. Hers was the consummate outsider's life: a "colonial" from the West Indies, she came to England at age sixteen and never got used to either its cold gray weather or the hypocrisy of its respectable classes, with their "damn voices like high, smooth, unclimbable walls" and their "secret hatreds that . . . peeped from sly smiling eyes." Having grown up a middle-class doctor's daughter, she lived for much of her adult life on the margins of "decent" society, first as a chorus girl and artist's model, then as a dependent on men she was sleeping with or was about to sleep with or had slept with at some point in the past, then as the wife of men who for one reason or another could not support her without resorting to crime or begging from their more affluent relatives. She moved from one dreary London bed-sit to another, one seedy Parisian hotel to another, one damp seaside bungalow to another; until she was in her seventies, she never had a permanent address or a reliable supply of food.

For most of her life, her books did nothing to rescue her from poverty. The four novels she published between 1927 and 1939 sold poorly and received little attention. During World War II she fell into a depression and could not finish anything, although she struggled to keep writing. When certain members of the London literary world discovered her out-of-print novels in secondhand bookshops in the fifties, they assumed she was dead. And if a radio actress had not wanted to adapt *Good Morning, Midnight* for the BBC and advertised for Rhys in the *New Statesman* to get her permission, she might never have re-surfaced. In 1957, she was given an advance of twenty-five pounds on a novel she had been working on sporadically, the story of the first Mrs. Rochester from *Jane Eyre*, told from the mad Creole heiress's point of view. Only in 1966, when the book was finally published as *Wide Sargasso Sea*, to great acclaim, did she emerge from her long obscurity. She was then seventy-six, but she lied about her age, as she had done almost all her life, and pretended to be only seventy-two.

The experiences of being a colonial and a hapless demimondaine, a discarded or about-to-be discarded mistress, are the central ones of her fiction, which depicts the degradations of the latter state in particular with such mocking lucidity that it is no wonder her work was considered "sordid" by her own generation and was later acclaimed by the feminists—to her alarm—as a political statement. Yet she never described her heroines' sexual experiences, except obliquely. (Here is Anna, the nineteen-year-old chorus girl in *Voyage in the Dark*, losing her virginity: "When I got into bed, there was warmth coming from him and I got close to him. Of course you've always known, always remembered, and then you forget so utterly, except that you've always known it. . . . You shut the door and you pull the curtains over the windows and then it's as long as a thousand years and yet so soon ended.") What she wrote about instead were the despair and rage endemic to the dependent state, the petty cruelties of those with money and security towards those without, the terrors life holds for those whose circumstances mean they have to fight to survive, yet who feel themselves unequipped for even a confrontation with a suspicious landlady.

Certainly her books are not noteworthy for their subject matter alone. She wrote some of the most graceful prose of the century; she wrote as though she had no skin, in an artless-seeming voice that could be achieved only through extraordinary artistry. But just as certainly, much of her power as a writer derives from her creation of a female persona that is immediately recognizable and yet is wholly new to literature. When male writers wrote about "fallen" women, they generally glamorized or sentimentalized them to the point where they became little more than icons. With Jean Rhys, we feel we are getting the truth. Her heroines' yearning to be protected on the one hand and resentment of their protectors' condescension on the other are absolutely believable; so is their combination of helpless fear of the world and defiant scorn for its lies and cruelty. And like all great fictional outcasts, they serve to shed light on the society that has rejected them, although not in any political sense; she was the last person in the world to suppose that human nature could be reformed by the redistribution of capital, and she reserved her greatest admiration for aristocratic virtues like loyalty and courage, lamenting the absence of "splendid" characters from modern life.

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The one aspect of her experience she never wrote about was being a writer, although it was her writing, more than anything else, that kept her going. During the three great crises of her life—her desertion by her first, aristocratic lover, her "one true love"; the imprisonment of her first and then her third husband for irregular financial dealings—she turned to writing as to a lifeline. In a diary she kept in the early fifties, she puts herself on trial for her sins and then tells her imagined prosecutor, "I must write. If I stop writing my life will have been an abject failure. It is that already to other people. But it could be an abject failure to myself. I will not have earned death." Elsewhere, she said, "I know that writing is my truth and the reason I was born."

Much that has been published about her since her spectacular resurrection tends to treat her not as a conscious artist but as simply the desperate, suffering woman depicted in her novels. Because the tone of her fiction is that of someone simply talking to the reader—or railing at the reader, or crying out to the reader—people have tended to treat her as a naïf, a sort of primitive with an uncanny knack for self-expression. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This much, at least, Carole Angier's biography makes clear. Here was a woman who gave up her only daughter into the care of others in order to be able to write. And her second marriage—to a gentle and ineffectual literary agent and publisher's reader—seems to have been based entirely on their mutual dedication to her work. No downtrodden literary wife can have suffered more, and more meekly, than Rhys's husband, Leslie Tilden-Smith. Not only did he do all her typing, peddle her books to publishers, look after the housework, and scrounge up money to send her to her beloved Paris to work, he was also subjected to constant physical abuse. His friends and employers became accustomed to seeing him with black eyes and scratches all over his face, for by the time Rhys married him in the early thirties, she had become the alcoholic she would remain until the end of her life, and in her drunkenness would turn on him in a fury for trying to pry her book away from her before she considered it finished, or for hinting mildly that perhaps her work would sell better if it were not so relentlessly unpretty. When he died suddenly in 1945, she wrote to his daughter from his first marriage: "I had all the time the feeling that Leslie had *escaped*—from me, from everyone and was free at last. . . . I shall not ever forgive myself that I didn't stand up to things better—not ever."

It is notable, as Angier points out, that the kindly figure of Tilden-Smith nowhere appears in Rhys's novels, except as an auxiliary and slightly contemptible character in *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*. In her work, there is no room for the benevolent rescuer; there is only loneliness, betrayal, longing, rage, the smug cruelty of the safely monied and the desperation of those forced to live off their grudging largess.

In her own mind, she seems to have lived through her early experiences of humiliation and rejection over and over; they not only provided her with the subject matter and themes of her novels but also became the framework into which she fit all her later relations with the world. She never got over her abandonment by her first lover at age nineteen; she never got over, either, her conviction that people were sneering at her and trying to do her harm. In the novels, her obsession with the petty Darwinianism of the social order sometimes mars her work by precluding any acknowledgment of suffering by her respectable characters, but it also serves to charge her heroines' every encounter with significance. They can't simply accept the fact that people are likely to be unkind to those from whom they can gain nothing, or that in casual encounters most people are unreachable on a human level; they continue to protest such things as fiercely as a child might, and thus make us question our own acceptance of them. In her life, this obsession took the form of paranoid delusions that her neighbors were constantly whispering and plotting against her; in one case, she served a brief sentence in Holloway Prison for slapping a man she thought had insulted her. The experience inspired her to write one of her finest short stories, "Let Them Call It Jazz," in which a black West Indian woman who has been robbed and humiliated ever since she got to London is sentenced to Holloway for striking back at a nasty lower-middle-class neighbor who has been spreading stories about her.

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The history of Rhys's various breakdowns and near-breakdowns, of her relentless self-absorption and her attacks on the London literati who tried to alleviate the misery of her old age by pampering and looking after her, makes for depressing reading. Angier tries very hard, perhaps too hard, to find excuses for Rhys's behavior—endlessly citing her paranoia and loneliness, her overwhelming need to feel protected, her belief that no one who truly knew her could love her, etc.—but all her explanations cannot make Rhys's conduct seem palatable. That a woman who so eloquently protested the cruelty of the world should have treated other people so unkindly is not a pleasing irony.

Yet the most serious problem with this biography is not Carole Angier's repetitive attempts to understand Rhys's psychological problems, nor her equally repetitive attempts to prove that the novels represent a progress towards greater self-knowledge and compassion. The real problem is a practical one: there was simply not enough information to fill out a long biography. Rhys lived in total isolation for so long, and became famous so late, that she does not appear in the letters or diaries or literary gossip of her contemporaries. And by the time Angier came to write her book, most of the people who had known Rhys when she was younger were dead themselves. In Angier's earlier, short book on Rhys, written for the Penguin Lives of Modern Women series, she had already presented much of the hard information that could be gleaned—such as the glamorous identity of the man who broke Rhys's heart and who appears in a somewhat diminished guise as Walter Jeffries in *Voyage in the Dark*. In this much longer, less successful treatment of her subject, she too often extrapolates from the books themselves to deduce what must have happened at a given point, or else simply confirms what we already suspected—and what has already been told in the many articles on Rhys: that her novels are highly autobiographical.

Thus, we learn that the story of the dreamy, fearful young girl who comes to England from the West Indies in *Voyage in the Dark*, becomes a chorus girl, falls desperately in love with the wealthy older man who takes her virginity, and is then deserted by him is Jean Rhys's story. The story of the passive young woman in *Quartet* (Rhys's first published novel), who winds up penniless in Paris when her adventurer husband is thrown in jail for trafficking in stolen antiques, and who is then taken in by a pair of wealthy English Bohemians and winds up ensnared in a humiliating affair with the man, is also Jean Rhys's story. (The model for the male in the triangle was Ford Madox Ford, who became not only her lover but also her mentor; he published her first stories in the *Transatlantic Review* and found a publisher for her short-story collection, *The Left Bank*, to which he wrote an admiring introduction.) *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, the story of a woman who has been pensioned off by her pompous, cautious lover, returns to England from Paris to visit her dying mother, and is rejected by her grimly genteel family, is yet again the story of Jean Rhys. And finally, the story of Sasha in *Good Morning, Midnight* is to a large extent hers too: here we see an older, more bitter, more frightened woman, totally suspicious of everyone's motives, a woman recovering from a long bout of drink and loneliness, who has been sent to Paris by a condescending friend and who discovers while there that she, too, has the power to wound: that, in fact, she is no longer capable of loving anyone, any more than anyone is capable of loving her.

The problem then becomes, why retell these stories, which Rhys herself told so much better? Like many other writers, Rhys was adamant about not wanting any biography of herself written; partly to forestall any such attempt, she began composing an autobiography while in her eighties, which was published posthumously in its unfinished form as *Smile, Please*. In her case, her feelings about biography seem more justified than usual. The only thing to be gained from reading Angier's book is that, seeing her "material" reworked by someone else, we realize more forcefully than ever just how good a writer Jean Rhys was. She had, wrote Ford, "a singular instinct for form, an instinct for form being possessed by singularly few writers of English and by almost no English women writers." That instinct enabled her to transform the messy realities of a "hideous" life into art. Carole Angier, for all her good intentions, can give us only the dreary details of the mess.

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Basher

BAD: OR, THE DUMBING OF AMERICA. *By Paul Fussell. Summit Books. $19.*

Reviewed by ERICH EICHMAN

After many years at Rutgers University, Paul Fussell is now a professor of English literature at the University of Pennsylvania, where he holds an endowed chair. He is perhaps best known as the author of *The Great War and Modern Memory*, a study of the literary culture of Britain's wartime generation. But he has also written several other books, among them a short, estimable study of eighteenth-century prosody. After reading *BAD: or, the Dumbing of America*, one wishes Mr. Fussell would return to the eighteenth century, for his own sake and ours.

Mr. Fussell's latest book is a vicious, overdrawn, humorless rant, a tirade directed at what he sees as the vulgar commercialism, fraud, and bad taste of American culture. Its tone is sour and off-putting, and its analysis is disfigured by an odd intensity of emotion. Equally disfiguring is the obvious contempt Mr. Fussell feels for practically *every* aspect of the country he has been forced, by birth, to inhabit for so many years. (He is now on sabbatical in England, by the way.)

The aspect of America that offends Mr. Fussell most is its consumer culture. He is appalled by America's "luxury" hotels, "gourmet" restaurants, and "friendly" airlines, by its self-flattering college brochures and "genteel" mail-order catalogues, by its too-round, too-red apples, by everything that has been dressed up, "refined," or made to "put on airs." The whole business of selling is, for him, a mix of false promise and euphemistic disguise by which canny businessmen prey on uncertain tastes and class anxieties. The result, he tells his readers over and over again, is a culture of phony elegance, pseudo-learning, pretense, and poppycock; of faux gentility and tacky glitter, a culture where everything is "inflated by hyperbole and gilded with a fine coat of fraud."

Who is to blame for this state of affairs? Mr. Fussell points a finger at advertisers, of course, with their attempts to flatter and persuade. But they are only the efficient cause. The root of the problem is the public's "will-to-believe." A certain kind of American, according to Mr. Fussell, is so stupid and so credulous that he takes witlessness for charm, tawdriness for elegance, and boredom for fun. This American is so incapable of independent thought that he cannot "estimate the value of anything without prompting from self-interested sources."

Who is this gullible person, exactly? To answer that question, one must turn to Mr. Fussell's 1983 book, *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*. There, beer-guzzling "proles" and undernourished members of the upper classes come in for occasional ridicule, but the middle class earns Mr. Fussell's fullest contempt. This group, in his view, shows an embarrassing earnestness and psychic insecurity. It is forever aping its betters out of status panic. It is a sucker for "decor." And even as it yearns for "gentility and grandeur," it cannot cure itself of an innate nervousness and timidity. "Middle-class man," Mr. Fussell bluntly asserts, "is scared." He quotes Lord Melbourne, the nineteenth-century statesman and aristocrat, with obvious approval: "The higher and lower classes, there's some good in them. But the middle classes are all affectation and conceit and pretense and concealment."

BAD: or, the Dumbing of America is a comparatively brief exercise, best understood as an appendix to Mr. Fussell's earlier book. Many themes, indeed many examples, from *Class* reappear in *BAD*. They are aimed at documenting still further the supposed awfulness of this contemptible middle class.

And how contemptible it is, in his view! Mr. Fussell describes the average American as dull, ill-educated, insecure, self-righteous, infantile, vain, and pretentious. The greatest sin among these is *pretentious*, a word that appears with annoying regularity throughout *BAD*. It refers to the defining flaw of the American middle class: its striving, its nervous over-reaching. The upper-case letters in the book's title are meant to designate this flaw.

For all his apparent snootiness, Mr. Fussell forgives America its lower-class tastes. *The National Enquirer*, Muzak, "Oprah," trailer parks, diners, bowling alleys, commercial

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television—these things do not offend him because they pretend to be nothing more than what they are. They are, as objects of taste, merely "bad." It's the alleged craving for a *false* status, the claim to a *false* value, that leads Mr. Fussell to invent a more invidious label. "The quintessence of BAD," Mr. Fussell writes, is the "gap between pretension and actuality." Implicitly, this gap goes unrecognized by the status-anxious middle-class American.

Mr. Fussell offers the example of the "gourmet" restaurant. The average "prole" would not go near it, nor would a bona fide member of the upper class. But the striving middle-class consumer, in his hunger for elegance, is to be found there often. By Mr. Fussell's account, such a consumer fails to see these places for the mere microwave factories they really are; he doesn't mind the pseudo-French inside the menu or the fake leather on the outside. He doesn't even mind that such restaurants call themselves "dining establishments." He enjoys himself. He is guilty, Mr. Fussell would say, of BAD taste.

Similarly, "luxury" hotels and third-rate "universities" are said to pretend to a status they do not possess, and the same class-nervous American is said to eagerly buy the fraud. In Mr. Fussell's view, "luxury" hotels are merely showcases of bad design, glittery pretension, and tacky decor: their "gracious" service is merely a sham display typified by the obnoxious pillow mint. The many obscure "universities" scattered across America are likewise little more than local teachers colleges with grand names. The degrees they award are intellectually meaningless; and although they claim to confer prestige and credentials, they rarely do.

This business of putting on airs and getting away with it is, for Mr. Fussell, the essence of American life. He cites movie actors who ham and mug as a substitute for acting and newspaper editors who inject their copy with grandiloquence. Worst of all are the friendly airline stewardesses ("flight attendants") who speak in a pseudo-proper way about "extinguishing all smoking materials" and who cart around "beverages." In Mr. Fussell's view, the airline travelers who enjoy this sort of "propriety" and "friendliness" are so stupid that they are "ignorant of the distinction between comfort and misery."

Like BAD people, BAD things abound in Paul Fussell's America. "Some objects," he writes, "are so obviously BAD that they are immediately embraced by the middle class, while objects that are merely bad (e.g., plaster Popeyes atop TV sets) gladden the hearts of the classes below." He has in mind here an odd assortment of BAD objects: Greek fisherman's caps, butterfly corkscrews, fancy chess sets, thimble collections.

How each of these objects fits the strict definition of BAD is hard to say. Indeed, as the book progresses, one gets the feeling that the term *BAD* is used promiscuously, sometimes as a label for mere kitsch and more often as a wide-open category for the many things that Paul Fussell just doesn't especially like. Thus, the term *BAD* is extended to include faulty bridges, errant navy missiles, public sculptures, and the Vietnam War. In a short chapter on BAD ideas, he goes so far as to inveigh against the idea "that the military should have an influence on foreign or domestic policy." The average reader may find it difficult to connect this politicized version of BAD with those faux-French restaurant menus cited earlier.

The connection, if there is one, is all in Mr. Fussell's head. America's consumer culture is, for him, its political culture writ large, or writ small, or vice versa, or something. It is hard to say exactly, for when it comes to politics, Mr. Fussell is not a careful thinker. No sucker for decor, he certainly is one for left-wing cliché. He ridicules anti-flag-burners, NEA censors, people who love guns too much, and the advocates of school prayer, all of whom are very, very BAD. He makes fun of Cold Warriors and Ronald Reagan, often seeming to suggest that it was anti-Communists who brought America its ill-educated youth and bad public sculpture. He explicitly asks—in the manner of an earnest sophomore who has just read *The Greening of America*—how a country can spend billions of dollars exploring outer space when "millions" of poor and hungry sleep "on its city streets." He cites without skepticism the claim that there are sixty million functionally illiterate adults in the United States. He seems to feel that hard-hearted Republicans are responsible for this illiteracy, as well as for homelessness and hunger. With typical hyperbole, he says that Americans want to "abolish taxes on the rich."

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Meanwhile, "Reaganism" is his shorthand for the soulless America he sees around him, where "tens of millions" of people define themselves, he claims, by going "shopping."

This is pure nonsense, which makes all the more revolting the breezy way Mr. Fussell's opinions are thrown down on the page, as if only a fool would gainsay them. Mr. Fussell probably considers the horror of America's political culture so self-evident that analytical thought and careful argument seem unnecessary. That well-meaning people on both Left and Right have tried to chip away at notoriously intractable social problems is a matter of complete indifference to him. He is far more concerned with maintaining an attitude of scorn than with apprehending the truth. He is so eager to ridicule the average American as both consumer *and* citizen that he favors caricature to complexity, and he impugns the motives of everyone with whom he disagrees.

Mr. Fussell is obviously enamored of his political prejudices, however silly and superficial they may seem to others. They allow him to sustain an attitude of easy superiority and, by means of an overarching thesis about America's BADness, they allow him to sweep together disparate aspects of American life and elevate his social insights when they threaten to seem trivial. It is one thing to complain about restaurant menus, quite another (Mr. Fussell seems to think) to connect them thematically with the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, the American moral distemper he sees everywhere looks like nothing so much as a quality of Mr. Fussell's own mind.

Although much of *BAD* is, well, pretty bad, some of it is not. A few of Mr. Fussell's judgments are in fact reliable. What he has to say about the shallowness of American higher education seems right, and the decor of the newest hotels may indeed be as awful as he says it is. And people *do* use words to dress up their lives and jobs and to strive for a kind of gentility.

Mr. Fussell is especially reliable whenever he discusses words. He notices the habit many of us have of multiplying syllables when we want to impress someone or when we are eager to add to our self-regard, and he has a good ear for euphemism. He finds it absurd, for example, when public television stations "avoid a phrase like *sponsored by* in

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favor of euphemistic formulas like 'This program is made possible by *a grant* from,' implying with *grant* that the whole operation is taking place in the high-minded, disinterested realm of foundations, universities, and similar nontainted institutions."

There are more than a few such observations in *BAD*. Unfortunately, they are overwhelmed by Mr. Fussell's desire to bash America and to mock, with a strangely intense bitterness, the middle-class pretension he sees constantly on display. "America's main contribution to the world is BAD," writes Mr. Fussell. "It is the thing that we are best at." In this mode, he is anything but reliable; indeed, he is given to his own forms of misrepresentation.

The crime of BADness begins apparently with the market economy, its "profit-grabbing and attendant fraud." The criminal by this reckoning is the American businessman whose hunger for money leads him to call mere restaurants "eating establishments" and to surround his goods with an aura of false gentility or class pretense. His exaggerated claims are said to be all but inevitable, so "powerful is the pull of mendacity once profit enters as a motive."

Like so much in *BAD*, this portrait is overdrawn. That selling and marketing involve some degree of hyperbole and flattering self-presentation cannot be denied; whether it amounts to mendacity and fraud is another matter. For one thing, the market has a wonderful circularity about it: enterprises do not long survive by offering people things they do not want or by promising things to people that cannot be delivered. Thus Mr. Fussell is forced to abominate, more than the "mendacity" of those who sell, the tastes of those who are gullible enough to buy.

But here, too, he misrepresents. He portrays the middle-class American as a robot-like creature, obedient to advertising, "without a will of his own." But that "robot" is probably much better at decoding advertisements and discounting for hyperbole than the average English professor. He undoubtedly also defines himself in ways far more complex than mere shopping or consuming. Advocates of school prayer, for example, whom Mr. Fussell feels obliged to mock on political grounds, obviously ask more from life than the thrill of another shopping experience.

One wonders whether sheer condescension causes Mr. Fussell to misread his fellow citizens in other ways. For example, lots of people probably find those plane rides pretty awful, including people Mr. Fussell assumes to be dull-witted and cheerfully accepting of the airlines' attempts to please. Doubtless even striving middle-class people are put off by hype and promotion. The difference is that they do not condemn the whole business of selling because only part of it refers to their own tastes and pleasures.

Would that Mr. Fussell were so forgiving. One cannot help wondering what happens to his anti-commercial views when the marketing "monster" attaches itself to the few goods that *he* approves of, such as his own books. Are those books so well composed that no one, reading their jacket copy, will feel the push of hyperbole? Should we condemn American commerce if we do feel that push? A reasonable person has a sense of proportion about such things.

But Mr. Fussell is not a reasonable person. As much as his own tastes are beyond question, those of the middle class are, for him, meretricious and commercially contrived. He seems to long for a pre-commercial idyll when things were left alone and allowed to retain their authentic charm and value, for those keen enough to grasp them. Just when that idyll existed, if it ever did, he does not say. One gets the impression from his book that, for all the busy buying and selling that has gone on for over two millennia, it was only when the Americans came on the scene that the world witnessed the crime of commercialism and the birth of the status-striving man.

Oddly, Mr. Fussell's moralizing in this regard reminds one of the moralizing of certain Victorians, among them the poet and essayist Robert Southey. Southey condemned nineteenth-century industry for what it was doing to the English countryside and its feudal way of life. He complained that the pretty ornamented cottages of an earlier time were being jostled aside by the new "naked" cottages of the manufacturers, cottages that stood "in a row" and presented features of "unqualified deformity." In Macaulay's famous rebuttal to Southey, he argued that more people benefited by the new dispensation of industrial life than had ever benefited before under the conditions of feudalism; and that "the pictur-

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esque" was not a reliable measure of progress or of political good.

The Victorian debate was about production in an industrial economy and its supposedly brutalizing effects, including the rude appearance of lower classes striving for a new material status. Mr. Fussell's quarrel is with rude consumption in a post-industrial economy. The terms are remarkably parallel. A striving, up-reaching class is very much at the heart of Mr. Fussell's own dislike of modern American life. The striving now is for social status, the battle for cottages having been won.

One wonders whether, like Southey, with his love of the picturesque, Mr. Fussell is inclined to judge the character of American society according to a misapplied standard of aesthetic value. If that were true, he would be as offended by foul words, roadside neon, and the home shopping network—all "prole" tastes—as he is by the pseudo-gentility of gourmet restaurants. But Mr. Fussell is not. If his concerns were aesthetic, he would probably be eager to defend the refinement of high culture against the depredations of the marketing agents who now purvey it. A recent television advertisement for the New York Philharmonic, for example, features a clip from a Lon Chaney werewolf movie. The soothing sounds of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* are said to "soothe the savage beast"; subscriptions are invited. Now that *is* pretty bad, but it is not the sort of thing Mr. Fussell is bothered about or finds worth mentioning. In fact, he doesn't seem especially concerned with the fate of high culture at all.

Mr. Fussell's condemning attitude is a bit baffling if the picturesque is *not* his measure of value, for then he is free to judge middle-class tastes in an entirely different way: approvingly, following Macaulay. The very pervasiveness and aggression of America's consumer culture can be read as a sign of the vitality and freedom that produce material abundance and widely distributed wealth. Material abundance, after all, allows publishers to bring out highbrow books on eighteenth-century poetry and allows airplanes to be built and their use to fall within the income range of middle-class people. The same capitalism that underwrites, for example, a university's budget will entail the freedom (and capital) to produce and market commodities and entertainments that fall outside one's own tastes. Even a professor with an endowed chair can recognize the value of such a design.

Besides, there is nothing inherently scorn-deserving in middle-class striving, in its reaching upward for higher status and more sophisticated tastes. One could even see the desire to improve oneself as a splendid American trait, worthy of respect. Such a desire can mean, after all, taking seriously certain things that were not initially a part of one's background: books, French cuisine, eighteenth-century poetry. All such learning and improving is, of course, undertaken with mixed motives and with varying degrees of success, but it is hard to fault the impulse. If at times it causes one to frequent "gourmet" restaurants or to talk in an awkward, "genteel" way or to watch PBS with a less than critical eye, who is hurt? Even Mr. Fussell admits that people find pleasure in doing such things. But that is what offends him so much: that people do not *know better* than to enjoy themselves in their striving.

One wonders why Mr. Fussell finds it so hard to view middle-class sentiment with sympathy, polite detachment, or fond amusement. Is it possible that he himself feels a certain status anxiety? Does he feel himself to be somehow implicated by the striving he sees all around him? Whatever the case may be, one wants to remind him that even those who claim to know better are subject to criticism on grounds of taste.

Apparently Paul Fussell does not chase after speciously "classy" commercial goods. But the tone of unforgiving contempt in *BAD* is perhaps itself in bad taste, and the naked self-regard that remains certainly is. At one point, he contrasts the false claims made for BAD things to the truth of what they actually are. And who determines that truth? "Bright, disinterested, and modest people." Mr. Fussell, patently, would include himself in that company.

One is reminded here, again, of *Class* and its notorious final chapter. In that book, after Mr. Fussell had finished his long tour through the American class system, he sketched a "classless class," a category inhabited by the amazing "X" person. This curiously Fussell-like character, it seems, lives outside the normal class boundaries that beset the rest of us; he flouts convention with a studied unconcern; he drinks cheap wine; he answers only

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to himself and his own eccentric tastes; he is insolent, intelligent, ironical. In short, his spirit is untamed by the demands of status and social regard that govern most of the rest of us, "scared," striving members of the middle class that we are.

BAD is a cry from the heart of this "X" class. It is a bitter record of the commercially driven, class-nervous vulgarity that American society inflicts on Paul Fussell and his "X" friends. It is also a screed against a political culture that favors dynamic capitalism even as it supports, at least part of the time, what can only be called traditional values. Neither the social nor the political analysis in Mr. Fussell's book is convincing, and both are made downright offensive by Mr. Fussell's tone of self-congratulation and mean-spiritedness, his smug expression of prejudice, and his reliance on reductive political cliché. On this last count, it perhaps is worth mentioning that the man who endows Mr. Fussell's chair at the University of Pennsylvania, the man for whom his chair is *named*, is Donald T. Regan, former chief of staff in Ronald Reagan's White House and later the Reagan administration's secretary of the treasury. Perhaps Mr. Fussell will write about ingratitude—no, INGRATITUDE—in his next book.

Mutable Memories

THE VICHY SYNDROME: HISTORY AND MEMORY IN FRANCE SINCE 1944. *By Henry Rousso. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Harvard University Press. $37.50*

Reviewed by EUGEN WEBER

France went to war in 1939 reluctantly, and events justified the worst expectations of her defeatists. Within a few weeks, in the spring of 1940, ninety thousand lay dead, nearly two million were prisoners in German hands, not counting the millions under German occupation. In July 1940, a few weeks after capitulation had been signed, the elected representatives of the Third Republic met in the Grand Casino at Vichy and signed over the country to eighty-four-year-old Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, once victor during World War I over the Germans at Verdun. Installed in the hotels of the well-known spa for liver ailments (the portals of the Printania Hotel, which housed the headquarters of the National Revolution, continued to carry a prewar plaque: "Baths, showers, gargles, serves all régimes"), Pétain's *Etat Français* and its New Order intended to purge and renovate the nation. They were first welcomed and then rejected as symbols of funk and treacherous skulduggery. After the Liberation in 1944, Vichy became an embarrassing interval, best placed in parentheses between the Third Republic (officially 1870–1944) and the Fourth (1944–58). But traumatic experiences, even when suppressed, retain an afterlife; and it is this afterlife of Vichy that Henry Rousso traces in a splendid book, whose fine translation comes at the right time.

The Vichy regime was directly responsible for the conviction of 135,000, the internment without trial of 70,000 suspects, the dismissal of 35,000 civil servants, the transportation to Germany of 650,000 civilian workers, and the deportation of 76,000 Jews, of whom fewer than 3 percent survived. In this perspective, the comeuppance of Vichy's friends after the Liberation was relatively gentle: about ten thousand killed without a trial, more than 160,000 sent to court and about half of these sentenced to various penalties—7,037 to death, of whom 767 were actually executed.

But Vichy did not really end in 1944. A national survey of 1983 shows that it is well remembered, with a majority of the French picking its end and its beginning, in that order, as the two most important events of the past half century. Of all wars, civil wars are hardest to forget, for, unlike foreign ones, the foes remain in place after the battle, and, when the shooting is done, the verbal civil war goes on. In France as elsewhere, the Second World War, unlike the First, was an ideological collision that tore the country apart as much as it did Europe, amplifying both old hexagonal rifts and contemporary ones between fascism, communism, and parliamentary democracy. In this view, Vichy becomes one catastrophic political crisis in a

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civil conflict begun in 1789, a hefty contribution to the long litany of political references like 1871, 1877, 1934, 1936, or 1968: trophies on a wall of political memories that inspire and aggravate the adversarial politics of every day.

French identity, Rousso reminds us, is rent by raspy sub-identities: Catholic/anti-clerical, Right/Left, anti-Semite/Jewish, all of which clashed in the 1890s during the Dreyfus Affair, and again in the 1930s around the Popular Front, as they would at Vichy, which Rousso likens to a replay of the Dreyfus Affair through which some of its participants had lived. Whatever the validity of the parallel, the memory of Vichy would be transmitted like that of Dreyfus, by way of the competing myths of Pétain's good intentions and of Resistance heroism, each of which reproduces earlier antagonisms and perpetuates them.

So Rousso's book is about political memory and about how this particular memory has worked so far. He approaches its evolution by dividing it into four phases: 1944–54, indignation and mourning; 1954–71, repression of reminisence; 1971–74, the shattering of earlier inhibitions and the return of themes repressed; since 1974, obsession—partly connected with the reawakening of Jewish memory. Although it helps to divide the story into distinct parts, the division does not always fit. If one judges Rousso's own presentation, the first two phases are a bit hard to tell apart, both being marked by heavy use of euphemism and of evasion. Thus, for example, the years 1940–44 are minimized as *les événements*; and the small monument put up in 1946 just south of Fontainebleau to mark the spot where Clemenceau's strong-minded aide, Georges Mandel, had been murdered by French militiamen tells us only that he was "assassinated by the enemies of France." Even so, in 1956 when Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* was selected for the Cannes Film Festival, the director was forced to cut out a shot that showed the peaked cap of a French gendarme in a French-run internment camp for Jews where many such caps had loomed.

Official memory found it hard to reconcile the retrospective vision of a French people united in Resistance with uneasy reminders of banal collaboration. When twenty-one veterans of the SS division that massacred 642 men, women, and children at Oradour-sur-

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Glane stood trial in 1953, fourteen of them turned out to be Alsatians. All twenty-one were found guilty but, within a week of the verdict, the Alsatian French were freed by a special law.

In 1951 the ninety-five-year-old Pétain died in prison. That was the year when four of his declared followers were elected to Parliament, and when a second amnesty law approved by Parliament left only 1,570 of the 40,000 imprisoned in 1945 for collaboration still in jail. By 1964 none would be left at all. Yet, despite lenitive gestures, reconciliation between French and French came less easily than between French and Germans. By the mid-1950s, military and economic cooperation with Germany had forged ahead (Rousso does not quote the Vichy technocrat who declared that Europe would be "made by ten bankers with an iron will") but, in June 1958, de Gaulle's shafting of the Fourth Republic was quickly compared to Pétain's betrayal of the Third. In 1959, the new head of state, in his turn, tried to erase the past: "We are one people," he cried in a speech symbolically delivered at Vichy, "whatever our vicissitudes, we are the great, the only, the unique French people. . . . So much for the past. Vive Vichy! Vive la France! Vive la République!"

This is easier said than done. Opening old wounds, recalling old humiliations, the Algerian War evoked more references to 1940, not less. Testimony to unflagging memory, 1959 also saw the birth of the best-known Gaulish resistant against Roman occupation: *Astérix*, who lives in a village divided by a great ditch and finds frequent occasion to chastise Romans, Goths, and Gallo-Roman collaborators.

From the seventies on, the tangled skein of memory includes a red thread of genocide. In 1945 one-fifth of France's Jewish population had disappeared, but Jewish evocations of their suffering remained curiously muted. In 1969, Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*, whose making had been financed by Swiss and German television, was shown throughout Europe and the United States, but not in France. There the president of national television, a decorated veteran of the Resistance, explained that it would "destroy myths that the French still need." Art houses were free to show the film to relatively few, but millions of television viewers only saw it in 1981, twelve years after its creation. Even then, another resistant and a cabinet minister, Simone Veil, herself the survivor of a concentration camp, found the film distasteful because it represents the image of "a cowardly, selfish, nasty France," with "far too few Resistants." That was close to how France had been during those years; yet Simone Veil had a point. Perception, although slow to stir, works mainly by excess. By the late 1970s one legend was replacing another: the image of a France unanimous in Resistance gave way to that of France unanimous in selfishness and cowardice.

And anti-Semitism. When in October 1980 a bomb exploded before the synagogue of the rue Copernic in Paris, killing four passersby, the prime minister, Raymond Barre, condemned "the odious attack that, seeking to harm the Jews, hurt instead innocent French people who were crossing the street." The curious thing is that, if not all French were sure that Jews were really French, French Jews shared the prejudices of their fellow French. All at the time attributed the terrorism to neo-Fascists, with no apparent thought for the real (and rather obvious) perpetrators: Georges Habache's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. So Jewish suffering recalled, and anti-Semitism that helped recall it, enriched the memory of Vichy but did not do much to alter national stereotypes. Contemporary polemics continued to draw their references from the past. In the crucial presidential elections of 1981, a classic clash between Left and Right, each camp accused the other of . . . collaboration.

Memory, A. N. Wilson suggests, is a form of necromancy: a way of predicting the future by talking with the dead. Or of explaining the present by talking about the dead? The dead must be made to speak, even be made to lie. Since they are dead, who is to tell whether the lines they speak are just the lines we write? Lines that sometimes we can't help writing because—prejudice, interest, and ignorance apart—we can't help simplifying what once was complicated.

Take one obvious example that Rousso offers. There had been many kinds and many stages of collaboration. The cautious procrastinators of Vichy should not be confused with ideological or opportunistic friends of the Nazis, operating mostly from Paris. Men who detached themselves from Vichy in 1941, or in

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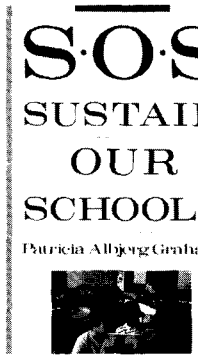
1942, had a different view of collaboration's uses (for France or for themselves) from those who lingered on. But the *notion* of collaboration stretches from the counter-revolutionary émigrés who collaborated with the national enemy in the 1790s to the Pétainists (and worse) who collaborated with another enemy 150 years later. The pejorative concept covers both. Like the emigration, Vichy has been placed in brackets as an inglorious and unsuccessful episode. The Revolution too might have been placed in brackets (God knows, it was murderous enough!) if it had not turned out glorious. To claim the glory one had to accept the gore, and, in due course, most did. In Vichy's case, there was only gore to remember—and humiliation without glory. Least said, soonest mended.

Rousso has shown that, whatever the rationalizations, things don't quite work that way. History can be taught, but it is not necessarily internalized like memory, which is a representation of the past, not just its abstract reconstruction. Memory, thinks Rousso, belongs in the realm of faith. History is critical and secular. Whatever the history they have been taught, however (and much history tells us more about the time when it is written than about the time it is about), by 1980, 53 percent of the French considered the government of 1940 right to sign the armistice, 43 percent regarded collaborators as "impardonable traitors," 34 percent attributed the Liberation mainly to French efforts (40 percent to Americans, 6 percent to Russians, 4 percent to the British). And in 1983, 23 percent would still send Pétain to life imprisonment or (especially the young) to death. While many agree it was good to stop fighting, almost as many continue to blame Pétain for his attempt to institute a New Order; but more prefer to think of him kindly as the victor of Verdun, where they would like to see him buried with other veterans in the memorial cemetery of Douaumont. The general of 1916 is edging out the marshal of 1940.

So memory with its inconsistencies and its convolutions gets the better of history with its positive aspirations. But history, too, can be an ideological construct; or a political football, as some of it becomes in the United States today. And memories, too, are constructs. In a United States much given to the use of myths to particular ends, and to polemics, recrimina-



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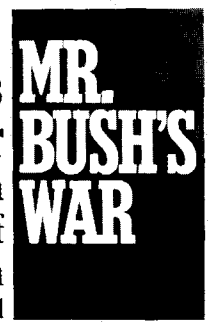

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tions, lies, and manipulative twisting of history on all sides, the tale that Henry Rousso tells should prove instructive.

Art of the Difficult

BEGIN HERE: THE FORGOTTEN CONDITIONS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING. *By Jacques Barzun. University of Chicago Press. $19.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

It is almost half a century since Jacques Barzun published his wise and witty *Teacher in America* (1945). I was, briefly, a graduate student in philosophy at Columbia University when the book was republished eight years later (as one of the first paperback titles in Doubleday-Anchor's memorable venture), and although I had read some of what William James and John Dewey had to say about teaching, Mr. Barzun's book was the first I encountered that took on the subject in a wholly contemporary, wholly pertinent way. From time to time I sat in on Jacques Barzun's course in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European history, where he lectured with elegance to an attentive audience. My assumption at the time was that small classrooms filled with discussion were preferable to large lecture rooms, but Barzun, along with John Herman Randall of the philosophy department, gave lectures that—though quite different in manner—were equally filled with informative judgments and mischievous critical wit. By contrast, Lionel Trilling seemed unhappy lecturing to students and was most himself in the give and take of classroom argument.

Teacher in America describes the lecture room as

> the place where drama may properly become theater. This usually means a fluent speaker, no notes, and no shyness about "effects." In some teachers a large class filling a sloped-up amphitheater brings out a wonderful power of emphasis, timing, and organization. The speaker projects himself and the subject. The "effects" are not laid on, they are the meaningful stress which constitutes, most literally, the truth of the matter. This meaning—as against fact—is the one thing to be indelibly stamped on the mind, and it is this that the printed book cannot give.

And yet Barzun's fluency and the "meaningful stress" with which he treats a subject come across remarkably in the books he has written. *Teacher in America* has a vibrancy and confidence that suited the postwar surge in college and university enrollments, with a concomitant ambitiousness about pedagogical possibilities. But no one, including Mr. Barzun, knew just what we were in for.

Begin Here, a collection of writings from the past four decades about school, teaching, curriculum, is subtitled (rather somberly) *The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning*. There is a pervading sense, in the essays taken together, of things having gone off the track in disheartening ways—of wrong choices made, wrong roads taken. In one of the essays, "Teacher in 1980 America: What He Found," we are directed to what "the once proud and efficient public-school system of the United States—especially its unique free high school for all" has turned into: "a wasteland where violence and vice share the time with ignorance and idleness." School is now the place that turns out functional illiterates numbering in the millions, a place where incompetent students are passed anyway, where any course is as good as any other one, and where "bilingual education" undercuts the teaching of English. Barzun is not concerned to explore the sociological fact of the United States as a multicultured society, members of which no longer inevitably melt down in the melting pot and turn into good democratic citizens who sometimes read books. His sharp eye and sharp tongue are inclined toward a more detached view of things, often ironic or satiric—and, as Wyndham Lewis once reminded us, satire is deliberately "unfair." These essays (many of them originally lectures) operate in bold, simplified strokes, and their formulations are correspondingly unambiguous. This doesn't mean that Barzun is less than wholly serious in his analysis but that his seriousness is not leav-

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ened with sympathetic understanding of the enormous problems of current-day American society. He may know all, but he doesn't forgive all.

If he's critical of bilingual education, he's completely unforgiving about "education" talk generally. The first two words of his book are strong ones: "Forget EDUCATION." He would have us talk instead about schooling and teaching; "educational nonsense" he defines as "any plan or proposal *or critique* which plainly disregards the known limits of schooling or teaching." It follows then that he has little sympathy with the monstrous courses "in" education and with the schools "of" education that have alienated so many prospective teachers by wasting their time, and wasting it in the terms of a vicious and pretentious vocabulary. Barzun characterizes the language in which educationists talk and think as one of "abstraction instead of direct naming; exaggeration of goals and results; seeing the student not as an individual but as an example of some psychological generality; taking any indirect means in place of the straight one." The substitution of words and intentions for facts and hard work is at the core of the educationist boondoggle.

Teaching, insists Barzun, is not problem solving (as the educationists claim) but rather "a series of *difficulties*." To deal with these difficulties is an art, and teaching is an art of difficulty. Recalling us to conditions of teaching and learning frequently forgotten, he reminds us that "it will always be difficult to teach well, to learn accurately; to read, write, and count readily and competently; to acquire a sense of history and develop a taste for literature and the arts—in short, to instruct and start one's education or another's." He even suggests that, when you think of it, the life of teaching is an "unnatural" life—invading the privacy of another to tell him or her how to think, how to behave. Yet given the ease with which Barzun is quite willing, in this book (as in his previous ones) to tell us how to think and behave, it's hard to credit his claim that teaching is unnatural. Say instead, as one of the most felicitous phrases in a book filled with them says, that it is "a blessing thoroughly disguised."

One of the most interesting chapters in *Begin Here* is titled "History is Past and Present Life," where Mr. Barzun describes in some detail what a curriculum of courses in history might look like from the seventh grade through high school. Since as a historian he believes that his subject is "the best remover of provincialism and egotism," he sets out to imagine how that removing might be done, beginning at around the age of thirteen or fourteen. As he does with "education," he scorns and deftly satirizes "research" when applied—and it was applied to the "research" papers my own children were assigned—to seventh and eighth graders: "The word should not even occur, for at that level the thing is non-existent." Call it what it is, a report on reading, instead of pretending that "Egyptian religion" is first "researched" then "acted out by the whole class." (Barzun reserves special contempt for such activities when performed by separate groups of students, lounging on the floor: he is all for desks and chairs—no "running about" on separate projects.) His notion of a desirable sequence of history courses is one that, over six years, would survey the bases of Western Civilization in the following order: American History, History of England, Europe Since 1500, An-

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cient Greece and Rome, The Middle Ages, American History Since 1865. Such "basic" courses would be conducted in an equally basic style, one that emphasizes nothing more or less than the centrality of reading:

> Read first and last. History is for reading, and developing a taste for reading history ensures lifelong pleasure. Let some striking portion of Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* be assigned to a few students, to be read and turned into a précis, the best summary to be read aloud in class. Other small groups can read and write something on the same subject, or a similar one. Teach the students to be good critics of what they read—which means, to know how to praise as well as to criticize—and not to moralize.

Recalling my junior high and high school experiences in social studies (as it was called), I note that it was the history part that stimulated me; that when we were given a narrative of events—a story, with the implied question, always, "What happens next?"—those events usually became engrossing. Unfortunately all too much time was spent on the social studies aspect: learning the principal products of various cities in New York State (Troy manufactured shirts, I remember), or fussing with questions of voting and politics by putting on our own make-believe election. This sort of learning to be a Good Democratic Citizen was treated by the clever ones among us with little respect (no doubt to our discredit). We should have been reading Prescott instead, or H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*—or any well-written narrative, however popularized.

Of course such a program as Barzun suggests has a lot less chance of getting put into place today than it had even in the 1940s, since it would immediately be dubbed elitist and hierarchical and thrown out the window. The "forgotten conditions of teaching and learning" these essays engage with so eloquently are not about to be remembered by administrators or educationists, Democrats or Republicans, nor by the Education President (remember him?). A stir of interest and indignation may occur briefly when statistics show we're running well behind the Asians and the Europeans in science subjects (a recent study has us ranking between eighth and thirteenth in achievement levels at various grades), but no one will worry overmuch about how, or even whether, history or literature or music get represented.

Barzun talks a lot about the importance of teaching "rudiments" and how learning them isn't "fun": "Sight-reading [of musical notation], taking dictation of intervals and rhythm, learning to sing and play in tune . . . learning to draw in perspective, to copy in various mediums, and use colors in the light of theory is nothing but hard work . . . some of it learning by rote." In the factory town where I went to public schools, almost nobody was headed for college; but we learned such things, those rudiments (even though I never could draw in perspective, hard as they tried to teach me), along with diagramming sentences, memorizing poetry, and too much gymnasium work on the tumbling mats and parallel bars. There is doubtless an element of Old Codgerism in the belief that these activities, or most of them, somehow did us good—but I confess to believing it.

In the book's last section (titled "Advanced Work") Barzun takes up life in the contemporary college and university, pointing out, in his introduction to the section, that college used to be—to the incoming freshman—a "revelation." Here is a place where you were called "Mr. or Miss in class without irony" (it's now Ted or Susie, and you would be politically correct to use "first year student" rather than "fresh*man*"), where "friendly but not chummy" faculty members taught "certain definite things of agreed importance," and, above all, where you spent "many hours of reading in real books, written by adults for adults." Fifty years later there is no comparable step up from high school, since colleges and universities

> have been transformed into a motley social organism dedicated to the full life. It does include the mental life, but certainly makes no fetish of it. Rather, intellect weaves in and out of the main business, which is socialization, entertainment, political activism, and the struggle to get high grades so as to qualify for future employment.

The incoming freshmen have already been told that they are mature and entitled to endless options; their last two years of high school have offered courses similar to the ones they encounter as first-year college students, and—

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as Barzun points out mordantly—"'research' holds no mystery: they have been expert at it since the seventh grade." Instead of a place apart, the college "re-creates the whole of society: unions and strikes, protests, insults, violence, madness, and the agencies needed to cope with these diversions." Those agencies include "a small army of security guards, a corps of psychiatrists and counselors, facilities for free artistic productions, a supply of contraceptive information and devices, and housing and subsidies for political and ethnic separatism." In 1949, when I was a freshman, my college's "security guards" consisted of a single slow-moving individual who was called exactly what he was—"Mack the Cop."

Can it be that in the changed circumstances of today's college or university much good work still gets accomplished by students and teachers just as devoted as ever they were to the life of the mind? I hope that Barzun would say yes, and agree that even though the college is now less a place apart than a re-creation of the larger society, there are still lots of students reading difficult books while managing to ignore counselors, security guards, and even contraceptive information. The sentiment from a Randall Jarrell poem has it that "in those days everything was better." If we hesitate to make that pronouncement about yesterday's college or secondary school compared with today's, we can at least agree that everything was . . . well, *different*. And Barzun's own assumptions about human psychology are so different from the going (and knowing) ones that he can claim, in a delightful commencement address given a couple of years ago to the New England Conservatory of Music, that it's important to find "a Self" . . . "a solid entity that you can trust, because you have made it yourself and made it well." This "ordered set of reflections, conclusions, and convictions" should be the aim of teaching, and nothing is more difficult than the process of shaping that Self, making it well. The stimulus and discipline from outside that contributes most to this shaping is—once again—reading: reading "thick" books, books you want and need to reread. These are what provide the conditions for teaching and learning, just in case we forgot.

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

The True American Sage

J. C. Furnas has done a good service for your readers by calling attention to the "disproportion of public esteem between Mr. Dooley and Mark Twain" in his article "The True American Sage" in the Autumn 1991 issue. It is indeed a "cultural grotesque" that Finley Peter Dunne is not as well known and appreciated as Samuel Langhorne Clemens and all praise to Mr. Furnas for explaining why this should not be so.

However, Mr. Furnas errs, I think, when on page 572 he lumps Artemus Ward (Charles Farrar Browne) with the "cracker-barrel" humorists Petroleum V. Nasby and Josh Billings. It is true that Ward used strange dialects and grotesque spelling as did the humorists of his time but he did not simply misspell words which is easy enough to do. He misspelled them in a way that gave the word a more vivid meaning.

Sixty years ago Albert Jay Nock tried to do for Artemus Ward what Furnas is trying to do for Mr. Dooley, a humorist greatly admired by Nock. While never questioning that Mark Twain was a great humorist, Nock insisted that Artemus Ward was his superior as a critic. The trouble with Mark Twain, he wrote, is that he was suppressing great indignation even when he was dealing with human foibles in a humorous manner. One is conscious that a thunderstorm is likely to break at any time.

Ward, wrote Nock, "had the true critical temper; it pervades his criticism and makes it wholly acceptable. Its influence dissolves rancour. . . ." As Nock saw it, "the great literary artist is one who powerfully impresses a reader with an attitude of mind, a mood, a temper, a state of being without describing it. If he does describe it—if, that is, he anywhere injects himself into the process—the effect is lost." Ward was aware of this, for once he said of writers like himself that "the truth has found more aid from them than from all the grave polemists and solid writers that have ever spoken or written. . . . They have helped the truth along without encumbering it with themselves."

ROBERT M. THORNTON
Fort Mitchell, Kentucky

Montaigne

I was surprised to notice that Robert M. Adams, in his otherwise excellent essay on Montaigne (Autumn 1991), all but asserts that a conservative thinker is a doctrinaire thinker. This may seem to be the case in America, where William Buckley and Russell Kirk are the best known intellectual exemplars of conservatism. But it is a strange and unacceptable equation to anyone who knows the English tradition stemming from Edmund Burke and well represented by Michael Oakeshott in our time. This is a tradition expressly opposed to the application of abstract doctrines to political questions, a tradition dedicated not to the rigid maintenance of received procedures and structures but to the exploration of the implications of a practice established gradually, slowly, through the historical experience of a complex community of individuals. The best and most lasting reforms of social practices have been those achieved through exploration of what Oakeshott calls "the intimations of a tradition of behaviour." In the view of a conservative of this nondoctrinaire stripe, a state is able to adopt significant reforms, not because an abstract argument can be deployed in favor of them, but because the members of the community, on balance, find that their own traditions imply that it is right to do so, even though some of them, at some times, may not want to admit that it is right. Such, by this accounting, has been and is the story with the gradual transformation of the social and political status of women and ethnic minorities in the United States.

Montaigne, by Adams's own account, is just such a conservative, and consequently the "poetic justice" Adams claims to find in French history after Montaigne is vacuous. The "progressive content" he thinks history has retroactively foisted on the essayist is an illusion created by his own commitment to the political correctness of the moment—of our moment, that is. Montaigne was blessedly free of the cant of progress that afflicts Adams and would have been able to assess the reign of Henri de Navarre without worrying whether it was tending toward a correct end. He would have been unlikely to think that political practice had, or should have, a particular end in view other than management of the affairs of state. It is the modern leftist who

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thinks that a state or society should be heading toward a particular end and that he knows what that is.

MICHAEL L. MAGIE
Gig Harbor, Washington

ROBERT M. ADAMS replies: I think I am being corrected by Mr. Magie, but I agree with so much of his restatement that it's hard to hold things in balance. Perhaps the concept of organic change will help. It is central, as I understand it, to Burke's conservatism, as it invites the statesman to interweave his few, selected changes with the established traditions of his society. The rudiments of such a program can be found in the Renaissance, for example in Chapter II of *Il Principe*; but in Montaigne I don't find them. There is, on the contrary, a great deal of dogmatic, categorical stand-pattery (taken very seriously, as I noted, by Professor Starobinski, among others). Yet this doctrinaire conservatism is combined with a more diffuse but still pervasive assertion that the way of the world is constant, inevitable change *(branle)*. Montaigne states these two contrasting points of view, and leaves the reader to combine them, or choose between them, as he will. This openness could well eventuate in the smooth formulas of classical conservatism—but equally well in other logical or illogical alternatives. But I don't think Montaigne did very much to point us toward a resolution. Part of his wisdom—which is not really reducible to a formula—was to go with the flow. The political content of that attitude—vacuous indeed, in itself—depends altogether on the current state of the flow.

In Defense of Orphanages

If Dr. Aring had called his article in your Autumn 1991 number "Memoirs of an Old-Time Orphanage" or some such title, it would have been acceptable. Having been consultant to more than a hundred Children's Homes, most of which started as orphanages, including the one in which Dr. Aring lived as a boy, and written the official history of twelve of them, I have heard the story dozens of times, with very few variations. The German Protestant Orphans Home with its almost illiterate superintendent was atypical only in that respect in an era that saw such great leaders as W. P. Jacobs, Robert Buckner, and Atha T. Jamison.

But when the article is entitled "In Defense of Orphanages" surely one might expect of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR that the author had some knowledge of the history of these institutions and of the realities of residential child care today, instead of ascribing their decline to finances, touting one particular Home as "no doubt the outstanding orphanage in the United States" (on what authority I do not know), and putting forward as a brand new idea a concept that has been tried a number of times with very moderate success.

The orphanage served the needs of its time. It had its good and bad aspects. A good case, although a controversial one, could be made for its selective use today, although, thanks to Dr. Aring's profession, there are far fewer true orphans than there used to be. Dr. Aring is correct in noting that the full orphan gained most from it, but not the reason he adduces. The full orphan was not troubled by conflicting loyalties to his parents and to his present caretakers. Many did become successful businessmen or professionals, largely because one of the things the orphanage taught was how to survive in a highly competitive society, but unfortunately at the cost of shallowness of relationships. It is interesting that in Dr. Aring's account and in his dream of a perfect orphanage there is no mention of any positive relationships with the adults who actually cared for him. They are simply "the administration."

Residential care for children has had an interesting developmental history, not all of it favorable, but I would plead for a scholarly and informed treatment of it in a journal in which I expect both scholarship and substantial knowledge of one's subject.

ALAN KEITH-LUCAS
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Toys in My Attic

It is always a pleasure to encounter, in an article seeming to commend accurate proofreading (Aristides' "Toys in the Attic," THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Winter 1992)—or at least giving it two cheers—an error like the reference to E. M. Forster's novel "*Howard's End*." Delete the apostrophe. I was once severely scolded by a student, an addict of Forster, about that apostrophe, and informed that its insertion changed the whole meaning of the novel. Ever since, I have been trying to figure out how it does.

But Aristides gets *Finnegans Wake* right—no apostrophe. I have goofed over that one too in the past. But even more than with Forster, I am puzzled about how the apostrophe falsifies the interpretation of that work, if it can be said to be susceptible to interpretation at all.

DONALD GREENE
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The usually sharp Aristides is quite obtuse in expressing his delight for "linguistic inventions" in "Toys in My Attic": *antipático* is a very good Spanish word used in one of its meanings as an antonym of *simpático*. There is no need to give credit to Chips Channon or anyone else.

CARLOS F. MENDOZA-TIÓ, D.D.S.
Santurce, Puerto Rico

Scientific Fraud

There seems to be some wonderful—if unintended—imagery in David Goodstein's article "Scientific Fraud" (Autumn 1991). Mr. Goodstein refers on page 513 to "serious breeches of ethics . . . under the cloak of anonymity. . . ." Some sort of scientific garb, perhaps? Or does Mr. Goodstein mean to suggest that someone who commits fraud is quite literally caught without his pants on?

SYLVIA BAUMGARTEN
New York, New York

A Sly Don Called Ayer

In his review of *The Meaning of Life* by A. J. Ayer (Winter 1992), Jim Holt takes note of the analytic vs. synthetic distinction which he says "has been familiar since Kant." He then goes on to illustrate an analytic proposition with "2 + 2 = 4" and this is quite misleading if it is taken to mean that Kant would have regarded that proposition as analytic. On the contrary, Kant held that all arithmetical and geometrical propostions are *synthetic*, a novel claim that was later developed by Brouwer and Heyting into intuitionist mathematics which stands as a rival to the logicism of Ayer and Russell.

JOHN E. SMITH
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Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

Amadeus and Mozart

I found A. Peter Brown's article "*Amadeus* and Mozart" (Winter 1992) disturbing: not so much for what it said, but for what it left unsaid. After single-paragraph reviews, the author is able to dismiss two recent books on Mozart as containing "many wrongheaded interpretations," or as just nothing more than "tabloid biography masquerading under documentation." Yet, after full pages of damning testimony within the body of his article—detailing the many inaccuracies, gross distortions, and outright fabrications of Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*—Mr. Brown can only conclude that we really know very little about Mozart, the man, despite the wealth of contemporary documentation, including the composer's own letters.

I submit that any intelligent reading of those letters might not tell us everything about who Mozart was; but they certainly would tell us who he was not. And anyone versed in those letters seeing the film *Amadeus* would quickly realize that this production was another "tabloid" potboiler of the worst order—masquerading as art.

On the contrary, Mr. Brown does not even address the question whether a portrayal of Mozart such as that of *Amadeus* is worthy of its subject. Is a portrayal of this sort—largely based on misinformation, if not outright fabrication—proper? Is it justifiable? Or is it reprehensible? Answers to these questions would seem pertinent, given the tremendous influence *Amadeus* has had in "educating" the grand public about a great composer.

Instead of providing—or even attempting—such answers, Mr. Brown comforts us with the good news that the "David of Mozart" has beaten out the Teutonic Goliath (Beethoven) in the Ratings Game. And as proof of this victory we are treated to the growing list of Mozart's Medals: a commercial for Maxwell House coffee, one for Cheer laundry detergent, one for Lee jeans, and a really big one for MacIntosh computers.

To have one's good name and character dragged in the mud just to sell a few jingles might seem a dear price to pay. But we all know: the marketing of the product *is* the name of the game!

WALTER SCHENKMAN
Professor of Music Emeritus
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, Colorado

A. PETER BROWN replies: I am sorry to learn that Professor Schenkman was disturbed that I did not write the article he wished. It seems to me that works such as *Amadeus* should be viewed from two perspectives: dramatic and historical. Although its author and producer admit that they "claimed the grand license of the story teller," my article was written from the historical perspective; my goal was to "set the record straight." From the dramatic perspective, I think *Amadeus* must be recognized as a compelling success on both the stage and screen.

For as long as there have been plays, dramatists have fashioned their works after historical incidents, personages, and prototypes. William Shakespeare's historical plays are loose with both facts and relationships. Metastasio—the leading dramatist of the eighteenth century—adapted historical personages

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and incidents for his opera librettos in tribute to the Holy Roman Emperor. In our own time, "Hollywood" has been using history as a foil for fiction since the inception of the film industry; not only have Shaffer and Forman used the historical past, but so has Oliver Stone in a series of controversial films. That many of my students want to have Mozartean fiction separated from history, I find encouraging—not disconcerting, as I think Professor Schenkman would.

To accuse me of avoiding the questions he wishes to have answered, Professor Schenkman suggests my introductory material was a conclusion. This misconstrues the entire thrust of my article. I cited the commercials and commented on Mozart and Beethoven's relative standing today at the beginning of my essay not to report on the "Ratings Game," but as indicators of their receptivity by today's public. Professor Schenkman suggests that Mozart's "good name and character" have been "dragged in the mud" due to commercialization in the 1980s. Yet the commercialization of serious art has been characteristic of the twentieth century.

It is also difficult for me to accept Professor Schenkman's conclusion that the Mozart letters "certainly would tell us who he was not." First of all, I question if one can prove a negative by material not found in these artifacts. Second, one should ask how reliable are these letters and other documents? How credible are the members of the Mozart family and their friends as witnesses?

I believe that many of these documents are contaminated by the self-interests of the writers; they must be evaluated in context. For example, from 1762 to 1768 while the family was touring the continent and England, Leopold Mozart wrote some sixty letters to the Hagenauers in Salzburg. In this case Leopold was writing to not only friends, but also to a family that had a financial interest in their success. The letters from 1769 to 1775 written by Leopold and Wolfgang to their family in Salzburg may appear to be more reliable, but we know that at times they were aware that these epistles might be read by those in official Salzburg positions. But what about much of the remaining correspondence between Wolfgang and his father? During the 1770s and 1780s, Wolfgang was certainly experiencing the difficulties of trying to live his own life without his domineering father's interference; here, too, he may have played with the truth.

Published after my article went to press, William Stafford's book *The Mozart Myths: A Critical Reassessment* traces many of the Mozart tales to their origins and often demonstrates their unreliability. Yet Stafford's brilliant sleuthing also ends without definitive answers. Instead, he presents "two very different conclusions" about Mozart and Mozartean historiography. For anyone who believes that Mozart the man and musician is easily understood from the extant letters and documents, reading Stafford's book should be a humbling experience.

In Defense of Poesie and Bullfighting

As it is notoriously difficult to argue morality, especially with one who has felt the seduction of cruelty as powerfully as the most callous Spaniard ("In Defense of Poesie and Bullfighting" by John McCormick, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Winter 1992), I will try to stick to the facts. First, the Catholic Church did not threaten excommunication for bullfighting (excuse me, Professor McCormick does not like this word and prefers *toreo*—perhaps we can meet on neutral ground and call it death by torture) in the nineteenth century but in the sixteenth. Yes, even in those benighted years at least one person, Pope Pius V no less, recognized cruelty as cruelty when he forbade to all Catholics "performances which include torture to bull or beasts." Today, however, this is all but a dead letter, as Catholic priests condone and participate in incidents of animal torture, many of which occur against a background of religious festivals, such as Good Friday.

Second, granting Professor McCormick's insistence that bullfighting is not a sport but an "art form," allow me to mention a few other Spanish art forms: the dropping of a live goat from a belfry in the village festival of Manganeses; the winter festival at Los Llanos de la Cruz in which live ducks, rabbits, and chickens are tied down and stoned to death; the village festival at Coria, in which a bull, after being tormented by banderillas, runs a gauntlet of blowguns whose darts penetrate his body and eyes, and who is finally shot and castrated. The Mexican *novillada*, which is described with such affection, is nothing more than a bloodbath for amateur matadors, in which calves are more or less randomly stabbed to death. The list goes on, but I would merely like to ask Professor McCormick which of these traditional "art forms" he would care to defend and how they differ from *toreo*.

Third, outsiders are not the only ones who don't understand *toreo*; many Spaniards have joined the campaign to stop it as well. Bull torture has been banned in Tossa de Mar in the Costa Brava. Far from being popular in Spain, over half the spectators at a given *toreo* are likely to be foreign tourists. Bullfighting is banned in all but five Latin American countries—perhaps they don't understand their own traditions?

Wittgenstein, in a letter to a friend, once remarked, "What is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with

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some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., and it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious. . . ." I say, what is the use of being a professor in the humanities and a biographer of Santayana if it doesn't make you more humane, if you can still defend a barbarity like bullfighting? Are humane studies just a game? How does what Professor McCormick advocates doing to animals differ from what the Nazis did to Jews (to use I. B. Singer's analogy)? Such an article is unworthy of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

DENNIS MANGAN
Redwood Valley, California

JOHN MCCORMICK replies: Dennis Mangan's attack on "In Defense of Poesie and Bullfighting" hardly merits reply, but since Mr. Mangan's constituency of willful ignorance where bullfighting is concerned is large and noisy, it may be useful to respond.

I cite one part of the official Catholic position in the nineteenth century rather than in the sixteenth, because I was discussing the art of bullfighting on foot as it had developed in the early nineteenth century. My authority for later condemnation by various bishops (not by the nineteenth-century papacy: Mr. Mangan is correct) is the Conde de las Navas's work, cited in my article, and Rosario Cambria, *Los toros: tema polémico en el ensayo español del siglo XX* (Madrid: 1974).

As for sport vs. art, many people, including me, have written at length to make the case: see *The Complete Aficionado* (1967). To equate bullfighting with the stoning of ducks, rabbits, and chickens, together with the other horrors Mr. Mangan lists, is sophistry, to put it politely. He confuses a novillada, in which three-year-old animals appear, with the tourist's festival, for which no sane person would make a case. (By definition, a "matador" is a master of his profession; there can be no "amateur matadors.") My article affirms that cruelty to bulls occurs as an abuse by near-criminal people who lurk on the sidelines of the spectacle. Mr. Mangan ignores or dismisses my necessarily brief account of bullfighting as an art form. If art involves imagination, intuition, discipline, long training, control, and intelligence, as bullfighting most definitely does, then it is not the barbarity that Mr. Mangan and his fellows would have it.

No question, some Spaniards object to bullfighting; see Rosario Cambria's excellent book, among others. Bullfighting did not require banning in those South American countries in which it was never practiced. Bitterness against imperial Spain together with vast distances meant that bullfighting never became part of the tradition of those several countries. It was indeed banned after having been tolerated in Cuba, but then as a function of the Cuban proto-revolution against Spain. It is a matter of fact, as I did my best to indicate, that bullfighting has never been more popular in Spain than now, and that serious publications on the subject by responsible, and yes, humane people have multiplied in the past twenty years.

With reference to George Santayana's humanity, as well as my own, I would note that Santayana was a good aficionado, attending the Madrid plaza whenever he was in the city and corridas were announced.

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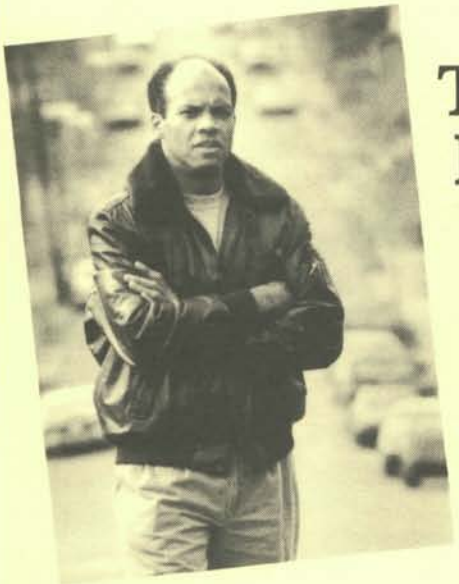

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